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The Work of the Ministry

LECTURES

GIVEN TO

The Meadville Theological School

JUNE, 1889

BY

REV. W. P. TILDEN

BOSTON
GEO. H. ELLIS, 141 FRANKLIN STREET
1890

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"*Resolved, That we, the students of Meadville Theological School, tender our thanks to the Rev. Mr. Tilden, of Milton, Mass., for his instructive course of lectures upon the ministerial offices, so beautiful in their spirit and so valuable in material.*

"*Resolved, That we feel that the course of lectures just closed, to which we have listened with so much pleasure and profit, would be still more valuable to us if we possessed them in a form more enduring and complete than that contained in the insufficient mental record and the incomplete note-book. We therefore take this opportunity to express the hope — if we may do so without trespass upon plans otherwise determined upon — that the Rev. Mr. Tilden may find it convenient to put in the enduring form of print these wise counsels to his younger brethren, these words so full of the spirit of manly Christianity, and which surely have proceeded from the experiences of a long and useful life, devoted to disinterested and noble service of the Christian ideals. For many years to come, before we ourselves possess the experience of long Christian service, we are sure that these true words of our venerable adviser will do much to guide us safely npon our way.*"

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IN complying with the foregoing request, I yield the distrust of age to the sanguine judgment of youth, and dedicate these familiar lectures to the students of the Meadville Theological School, past, present, and future, and to all earnest students of "the faith that makes faithful."

W. P. T.

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THE MINISTRY.

THE HIGH CALLING OF GOD IN CHRIST.—*Paul.*

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I.

THE MINISTRY.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, when I gave my last lecture here three years ago, it did not seem at all likely that I should ever come again to speak to the School.

There is a period in a man's life when three years tell. But, lo! they have passed, and here I am again, at the indulgent invitation of "the powers that be," to speak to this new School of some of the many branches of the Christian ministry.

I say the new School; for only one remains of that pleasant circle I used to meet, and he only to win his initial spurs before he enters the holy war. All the rest are in the field under the white banner of the Prince of Peace, battling each in his own way with wrong and sin, often thinking, no doubt, of the pleasant years they spent here in preparation for their work, and rejoicing

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that the number of students is steadily increasing. In this all who love the School and have confidence in the work it is doing rejoice also.

If this may be fairly regarded as a token of increasing interest in the work of the ministry, generally, we may well hail it as an additional joy; for the world never needed a true ministry more than now, and the inducements to enter upon it — the intrinsic inducements — were never more attractive and persuasive.

'Tis true that every now and then we are told that the ministry has lost its power, that Christianity itself is outgrown and must give place to something higher. This is no new cry. Some of us heard it a half-century ago, and learned to respect it as coming from honest minds. The cry has done good in helping us to discriminate between the letter and the spirit. That what passes for Christianity is very defective, very far from the simple teaching of Jesus, that many of its beliefs are unbelievable, an offence to reason, a libel on God and man, and a gross perversion of pure and undefiled religion, is only too painfully apparent. But these beliefs are only the mummy wrappings in

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which devout but mistaken worshippers have tried to embalm the *body* of Christianity, not perceiving that her soul is ever making new bodies for herself to meet the new exigencies of redeeming love. It is this soul that lives on from age to age, in the face of all the confident assertions that it is dead or dying. Beliefs change, but the spirit lives,—lives to clear its throat, and speak in truer and sweeter tones of God, man, and religion.

It is to study this spirit of Christianity you are here. You will not, therefore, be greatly alarmed by such as tell you that you have enlisted in a lost cause, that you have joined the corps of a forlorn hope. The cause of religion, pure and undefiled, never can be a lost cause while God lives and man is his child. And that can never be a forlorn hope which works for the uplifting of humanity in the spirit of him who shows us how "one with God is always a majority."

There are always bright tokens of encouragement in our sky, if we have only an eye to see them; and it does seem to me that as a Church we were never in a more hopeful and inspiring condition than now. But of this I shall speak more fully in my next lecture.

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On this, my first meeting with you, we cannot do better perhaps than to think together of the high and sacred work of the Christian ministry. It is an old theme, of course, as the everlasting gospel is old; but if, like that, it were not always new, you would not be here to fit yourselves for it. That it has already won your hearts, and waked in you a desire to give your lives to it, shows that you have already given it your serious thought. But it is a work that grows as we ponder it. Its real glory and blessedness do not appear at first. It rises as we rise to the contemplation of it from the watch-towers of Christian thought, where alone we can see it as it is in the real glory of its aim and end.

The need of keeping a true idea of our work before us, whether as students or as workers in the broad field of the world, is plain. We need it as a perpetual incentive to fidelity. Our first vision of its glory may fade. It may have been false in many particulars. The nearer we approach the real work, the farther it may seem from our ideal as it first broke upon us. We may get discouraged, lose heart, and especially, when we look over the field and see how many

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fail, drop out of the work, go into book-selling or the insurance business, we may come to question, whether, after all, the ministry be so desirable a profession,—whether it would not be as well to turn to some other pursuit more remunerative, with fewer anxieties and richer rewards. That not a few do, for these or other reasons, lose their first love of the ministry, and turn, reluctantly it may be at first, but gladly at last, to some more congenial work, is one of the discouraging facts that cannot be ignored. The present state of theology as a science, the breaking up of old beliefs, while the new beliefs which will surely come to take their place are as yet without form, and void, cloud substance not yet condensed into habitable worlds, serves, doubtless, to enhance these difficulties, and to make the work of the ministry seem more uncertain, nay, hazardous, than when the first fair vision came.

But this thinning out of the ministry at the beginning is a great blessing; a blessing to those who go and a blessing to the Church and the world. For no one who can be frightened away from the ministry, either from the fear of a crumbling theology, or hard work, or ill-success, or insufficient re-

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ward, is fit for it; and the sooner he finds it out, the better for him and for the world. There is plenty of good, honest work outside the Christian ministry; and there is no disgrace in turning to it, when faith and courage in what once seemed a higher calling fail.

But even those who have given themselves to the work with their whole heart, and who are troubled with no serious misgivings save of their own fitness, even they need — we all need — to keep the real work of the ministry before us, to stimulate courage and give us an assurance that in a work like ours there is not only no such word as fail, but no such thing as failure, save in our own fidelity to conscience and God. For though one's idea of means and methods may radically change, though his theology, even, may be turned upside down and inside out, so long as he holds on to God and the human soul, so long as he knows without a peradventure that he is God's child, and that every other human being is God's child, too, so long as he sees and feels that selfishness and sin enslave, and truth and love liberate, so long as he feels sure that the Christ spirit of self-sacrificing love for the world's uplift-

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ing is really divine, and that all who will may share it,—so long the work of the Christian ministry will have a charm for him that no difficulty or discouragement can break.

In general terms, I suppose, we may say that the grand aim and end of the Christian ministry is to lift mankind to a higher plane of thought and life. The old idea of saving souls from the wrath of God and future burnings by a scheme of salvation which makes it possible for God to forgive and man to accept forgiveness has not only passed out of liberal theology, but is fast passing out of all religious thinking; and the idea of salvation as the deliverance of human souls from whatever enslaves and debases, and lifting them into harmony with the divine will, is taking its place. This radically changes the whole conception of salvation. It no longer means deliverance from future peril merely, but from present evil, wrong, and sin. It still means restoration for the fallen. It still means forgiveness to the penitent. It still means new births to higher planes of thought and life. But all this is supernatural, only as life itself is supernatural. It is not in conflict, but in harmony, with human nature, which was plainly constructed on this plan

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of rising out of lower into higher forms of life.

Now, is there any higher work to which a human being can give himself than to a ministry whose sole aim and end is the elevation, the improvement, the perfection of the race to which he belongs?

Other objects are good and worthy, of course, nay, essential to human progress. Agriculture we cannot live without; manual labor in all its forms, commerce by land and sea, science, arts, common and fine, law, medicine, and all the rest,—all good and all mighty agencies in the education of the race, and capable also of becoming efficient agencies for its elevation, if rightly guarded and guided. But is there one among them all whose *sole* object is so high, so grand, so accordant with the highest and best within us, so hopeful, so inspiring, as this ministry to the soul, to the highest and deepest human needs? Many others, indeed, aid this ministry while engaged in secular pursuits. All, of whatever calling, who have the ministering spirit, may minister; and sometimes this ministry to the soul by men and women occupied with common cares and duties is so earnest and redeeming as to put to shame

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the comparative inefficiency of many who have been set apart for the ministerial work. But this only puts in stronger light the greatness of the work itself, and what it may accomplish, when one's whole life is completely consecrated to it.

One's whole life! Let us pause a moment on this thought. Do we sufficiently appreciate the exalted privilege of giving our whole lives to a work like this, of living daily in those higher ranges of thought and act necessary to the prosecution of our work? Other professions and callings, however important, are often of a nature to cramp the higher powers by fixing attention exclusively on secular pursuits. This habit becomes so fixed that it is only with an effort one breaks the spell. But, when the spell is broken and the higher life dawns, then every leisure hour is snatched with avidity for studies and duties that stand intimately related to the higher life. But with us our whole life-work is on this higher plane. We live in its atmosphere, and must, in order to do our work. We do not have to snatch time for it from other pressing cares. This is our one great care. All our time is to be given to it. Secular concerns are our recrea-

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tions. Our *duties* all lie in the higher directions of thought and life. From the very nature of our work, all our appeals, whether in word or deed, are to man's higher nature, to reason, reverence, conscience, the moral sentiments. We deal with the upper half of the brain, not the lower. We use no stimulants for appetite or passion or low ambitions. These we seek to restrain and control. Our constant work is with the higher nature,— to show the greatness and glory of a truly noble life, and to inspire men with the love of it. This is our vocation, our life-work. We get our living materially as well as spiritually by it; and isn't it a blessed privilege, if we really love the work, to have all the interests and incentives to fidelity lie so directly in the line of it?

Think of one who has an innate love of painting or music, but who from circumstances above his control is obliged to toil in other directions, giving only odd hours, stolen from pressing duties, to what he loves above everything else, think what a joy it is for him to know that the old obstacles are at last removed, and that he can now give his whole life to that which has won his heart! So, when one feels in his soul a love of the

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ministry, and longs to enter upon it with a longing not less strong than the artist ever feels for his work, but sees insuperable obstacles rising up before him,—what a joy it is to him to see the dam that choked his heart's desire give way, permitting the stream of his life to run freely in the channels of usefulness for which he has longed and prayed!

Some of you, doubtless, know something of this joy, as I did, when, as a young ship-carpenter, with a longing for some humble place in the ministry, I first saw a gleam of light shining on a very narrow path through which with God's grace I might possibly hew my way to the work for which I longed. But do we, after entering on our work, whether as students or as workers, often enough consider for our cheer and inspiration what a privilege it is, not merely to make our life-work the work we love the best, but to make it also the very highest work we know, work for the moral and spiritual uplifting of the world?

Let us think a moment of the atmosphere of thought in which a Christian minister must live if he would work successfully in his high calling. It must be the clearest,

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the purest, the very best. Nothing is too good to be wrought into his thought. History, poetry, literature of the best quality, are an essential part of his mental and moral outfit. This brings him into contact with the noblest minds.

Of course, as a Christian minister, he must first of all form a spiritual acquaintance with the thought, life, spirit, of Jesus, not merely with his recorded words, which may not always do justice to that wonderful soul,—for none but a soul well up on the mount of vision could record what was spoken there,—but a spiritual acquaintance with his spirit, with the aim of his life, with his relation to God and man, with the real object of his mission, with his sense of God, not only above and around, but within him, of his divine sonship, as both type and assurance of the divine sonship of humanity. We need this interior vision of his interior being, of that which made him the beloved son of God he was, so as to feel the touch of his spirit, and understand something, at least, of what the love of God and man was to him. It is this companionship with the spirit of Jesus that is essential to the accomplishment of his work. One must feel his own sonship

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before he can help others to feel it. He must ascend the mount if he would lead others up. The true minister is not a guide-post with finger-point, or a blazed path telling where others have passed. He must himself pass up, axe in hand, marking the way with his own sturdy strokes. His own feet must tread every step of the way, so that he can say not "Go!" but "Come!" as the brave general leads his soldiers to victory. To this end, he needs that fellowship of spirit with Jesus which will keep his soul alive with a sense of God with him, and the real greatness of his work.

And this fellowship with the noblest will lead to fellowship with *all* noble souls,—all true sons of God, all working for the uplifting of man. A ministry that should limit itself to the teachings of Jesus would hardly be Christian. It would lack the real Christ spirit of universality. To know Christ is to know all Christ-like souls. To follow Jesus is to follow his spirit, not necessarily his methods or his precise words, but his spirit. It is to recognize all men as children of God, and to open mind and heart, as he did, to all the fresh communications of divine love, through nature, through human experience,

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and the still, small voice. This brings one into fellowship with all the true workers for man. What a glorious company we thus gather round us! Do we fully appreciate the privilege of such a fellowship,—the privilege of pursuing our life-work in such companionship?

This might make us proud and dainty in our likes and dislikes, were it not that all this highest thought and best fellowship is to be consecrated to *lowliest* duties. This opens another thought we may dwell upon, as it shows the breadth and depth of our work and how it calls into exercise our whole natures. Those ministers who are led to the profession on account of the facilities it offers for intellectual culture, who court the society of their wealthy and intellectual parishioners, to the neglect of the poor and needy, whom they visit only now and then from a sense of duty,—even when they do not drop the profession and fall into literature, know little of the most important part of the Christian ministry,—its ministry to the weak and wayward, the doubting and despondent, the poor and the needy, the sick and the sorrowing. This appeals directly to the tenderest sympathies of our natures.

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It brings us into immediate contact with the shady side of life. It broadens our view of the Christian work. It shows us the need of pastors as well as preachers. It shows us that, if it be true, as is often said, that the pulpit is the minister's throne, he must not stay on his throne, but come down from it, and mingle with the common life and common wants of his people, before he can know what the Christian ministry means, or understand what was meant in the early day when the gospel was called "glad tidings to the poor." We cannot impress it on our minds too deeply that, wherever the poor are neglected, the gospel is not preached, however eloquent the pulpit may be.

And this attempt to minister to the wants, not of a few of the more favored ones, but of all, absolutely all, who can be reached by our sympathy, is as needful for ourselves as for those we try to help. It not only enlarges our idea of the work of the ministry, but enlarges ourselves. We grow not only in our knowledge of human nature and human needs, but we grow in the stature of true manhood. These lowly duties furnish mental as well as spiritual training. They stimulate thought as well as sympathy. Fools

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cannot do this sort of work. It demands wisdom, sagacity, quick-wittedness. It is a school whose text-books are living souls in all phases of experience; and he who reads not these books is unlearned in the deepest lore of humanity, though he may carry whole libraries of the world's best literature in his brain.

This work not only enlarges the mind, but especially the heart. It is a constant appeal to our sympathies. It keeps us from growing cold, fastidious, selfish. It enlarges our hearts for the cordial acceptance of that universal brotherhood which lies at the base of the religion Jesus taught and lived. Who, if he could, would dwarf his own nature by coming in contact with only one phase of human life, its happy, joyous, well-to-do experiences, knowing nothing of its heavy strains, its severe temptations, its sorrows and sins? The real divineness of our calling is seen in this: that, while it brings us into communion with the very highest thoughts and noblest fellowships, it consecrates all knowledge and all gifts to the humblest ministries to want and woe.

Here we join hands with all the workers for humanity the world over,—all that ever

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increasing company under whatever name, Social Science, Ethical Culture, Moral Reform, Christian Socialism,—all who are ministering to the poor and needy, all everywhere, of every name or shade of faith, or of no name, but who without avowed faith save in doing good to the world while in it,—all these the liberal minister will draw into the circle of his thought, his study, his fellowship, knowing that from all something may be learned for the enlargement of his conception of a true Christian ministry, and of the variety of methods that may be adopted for the building up of the kingdom of God.

It is not necessary to agree with any one in his beliefs or methods, in order to learn from him. If he be conscientiously devoted to doing good in his own way, we shall be wise to come close to him, that we may catch the fervor of his zeal, and feel that we have a common end in view.

And here we see our true relation to all other churches. In all practical work, it is a relation, not of antagonism, but of co-operation. Some of their doctrines we cannot accept, because we believe them untrue; but under this difference of opinion, perfectly sincere on both sides, there is an es-

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sential agreement as to the aim and end of all religion. There is a real unity of spirit and purpose as to all the moral and philanthropic movements for the suppression of vice and the promotion of virtue. We may say of them, as they frequently do of us, that "one is often better than his theology."

In the early days of the anti-slavery reform, all Abolitionists were drawn very closely together, however diverse their religious opinions. Dr. Furness, of Philadelphia, always a Unitarian, was among the early and earnest pleaders for the right of the slave to freedom. Henry Ward Beecher, at that time a stanch Orthodox, defended his fellowship of Dr. Furness by saying "there were some mechanics who could do a better job with a jack-knife than others with a full kit of tools." To Beecher, in this early day, Unitarianism was a mere jack-knife theology; but, when it stood for liberty for the bondman, it was more honorable in his eyes than the most complete set of Orthodox tools that could build churches and systems, but leave the slave in his chains. Now, we who are professed liberals should be at least as liberal as that, and say of what to us seems like a jack-knife theology, if it pro-

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duces results akin to those for which we labor, we will rejoice in the results by whatever tools. Where shall we look for labors more abundant in educating the ignorant, reforming the vicious, promoting temperance, chastity, self-denial, self-control, and self-sacrifice than we find in those churches with whose theologies we are widely at variance? How cheering it is to know that, while so far apart in our thought, we are so close together in the great end of our practical work!

But you say, perhaps, They will not acknowledge *us* as coworkers, because we lisp in pronouncing the creed. Alas! it is true in spots, large spots, too; but this we should regard as a divine call to show the more excellent way by acknowledging them as fellow-workers for God and man just in proportion as their labors tend to moral and spiritual elevation.

But not only all the best and noblest powers of earth are with us, but the *Power* that moves these powers. Above all, these ministering spirits here on the material plane are all holy agencies in the invisible world, with the risen Jesus still about his Father's business, and God himself filling and inspiring all.

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What richer privilege could be given by a loving Father to his waiting children than the privilege of working with such redeeming agencies for the uplifting of the world? As individuals, we may do little. But to be only a drop in that stream of moral and spiritual power by which the great wheel of redeeming agencies is turned is enough to awaken unfeigned gratitude to God. For, though that drop be lost to human sight soon as its force is spent, though it be dashed off in spray and absorbed by the sun, it has aided in the noblest work God ever gives to man or angel.

I congratulate you, students of theology and religion, on the choice you have made of your life-work. I have tried to tell you my conviction that there is none nobler on earth, none more richly rewarding, none whose compensations are so sure and satisfying. I can truly say, as an old man, with only ordinary success in the ministry,—perhaps not that, judged by the common measure of success,—that, could I live my life over again, and have the free choice of my life-work, it would unhesitatingly be the ministry. It would be the Christian ministry. It would be the Liberal Christian ministry. So I say

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again, from my heart I congratulate you on the choice you have made of your life-work. Keep the nature of that work fresh before you; and, if in any hour clouds should gather and unforeseen difficulties make you despondent, look up, and, remembering with what a glorious band of ministering spirits on the earth and in the heavens you are working, sing with them:—

"I live to hold communion
With all that is divine;
To feel there is a union
Between God's will and mine,
For the cause that lacks assistance,
For the wrong that needs resistance,
For the future in the distance,
For whate'er is good and true,
For all human hearts that bind me,
For the task by God assigned me,
And the good that I can do;
To labor for that season
By gifted minds foretold,
When men shall live by reason,
And not alone for gold,—
When, man to man united
And every wrong thing righted,
The whole world shall be lighted
As Eden was of old."

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OBJECT OF PREACHING.

I AM COME THAT YE MIGHT HAVE LIFE.—*Jesus.*

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II.

OBJECT OF PREACHING.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, the composition and delivery of sermons come under your regular study of Homiletics, and of this I have nothing to say. But I wish this morning to speak of the object of preaching.

The obvious drift of thought among us is very plainly towards a deeper religiousness, a larger and profounder conception of the divine life. It is seen not only among ministers, but laymen as well. It is not limited to either wing of thought among us, right or left. Both wings are lifted by an impulse to rise. Whether the emphasis be laid on ethics or worship, on church extension or church life at home, on organized charities or the charities that lie too close to us to be organized, on philanthropies that reach out or spiritualities that reach in, on external doing or internal being, there is a manifest desire for reality, for life, to pass

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through the letter into the spirit, to rise out of routine, whether of worship or of work, into consecrated service for God and man.

I have been greatly cheered by the tokens of this spirit among our young ministers. Soon they will be our middle-aged ministers, our leaders in thought and work. The fathers are going. Young men are coming. And when we see them touched with a holy enthusiasm for their work,—an enthusiasm for making the future better than the past or present,—we may well thank God all along the line, front and rear, and take courage in the bright promise it gives of a "new heaven and a new earth," not separated as of old, but united,—a new heaven on earth, and a new earth made heavenly by a heavenly spirit.

It is delightful to see how all the Clubs, Guilds, Literary Circles, King's Daughters, Ten Times One, and the like, are gradually deepening in their tone, working down from surface to centre. The suggestion made so earnestly by some of our young ministers of "collegiate churches,"—churches with two or more ministers united in their labors,—that ministries to the home and the workshop may be united with the ministrations of

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the pulpit, comes, if I rightly interpret, from this earnest desire to make our ministry the instrument of a broader and deeper work. All such signs in our denominational heavens are of the dayspring kind. They not only herald the dawn, but are themselves bright rays of the morning light.

It seems to me, as one who has been intimately associated with the work of our Unitarian Church for more than half a century, that I have never known a period when the signs of the times were more auspicious than now. We are not only gaining in numbers, which would be little to boast of if that were all, but we are growing in spiritual earnestness, zeal, and power. Of course there is much yet to deplore, but to deplore evils sincerely is one step out of them; and to long for a closer walk with God is to begin the journey, not alone, but with divine companionship.

This mental and spiritual condition, so healthy, so hopeful, makes the grand object of preaching not only a fitting theme, but one which lies right in the path of such as are to make the ministry their life-work.

Perhaps you may think that, with our broad view of religion, we should not speak

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of the *object*, but the *objects* of preaching, since they are so many. 'Tis true, indeed, that the proper themes of the pulpit are many and ever increasing. The earnest search after truth, and the application of it when found to all life, outward and inward, the history of the Church, the geography of the Holy Land, which to Renan was "a fifth Gospel," the origin and history of sects, creeds, church ceremonies, church schisms and healings, church days, their observance, their significance, the great religions of the world with their Bibles and the various views held of their inspiration, the conflict or harmony between science and faith, the sympathy of religions, and, above all, the application of eternal verities to all the wrongs, oppressions, and sins of the world,—how, it may be asked, with all these subjects, and many more that might be named, so legitimate, so inviting, so needful, if one would keep abreast of the times, and see that his people are informed concerning all the latest and freshest thought on all these themes,—how can one speak of the object of preaching as if there were but one? Is not every one of these subjects germane to the pulpit? Every one, I should say, and still more as

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time may reveal their nature. And yet I think we may speak of the *object* of preaching. For, while the proper and legitimate subjects of the pulpit are beyond count, the grand object of preaching is ever the same,—to lift man to a higher plane of thought and life, to quicken and stimulate his religious nature, to wake up and wisely direct his moral and spiritual powers, to lift him out of the animal into the spiritual life, out of self-indulgence into self-sacrifice, out of hate into love, out of sin into righteousness, out of irreligion and the blighted life that goes with it into a God-trusting faith and a pure and noble life. No matter how various the themes of the pulpit, no matter how wide the range of topics, no matter how rich the stores of knowledge, how vast the reading or fine the culture brought to it, if only the great object of preaching be kept steadily in view.

This is a matter of grave importance. It requires constant thought and care. There is manifest danger of substituting a subject for the object, of so elaborating a subject —church history, for example, as to lose sight of the object,—church life; of so treating the sympathy of religions or the Holy

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Land as to lose sight of the end of all religion, sympathy with the divine, and that which makes all lands holy,— the presence of God in all nature and all souls. I do not mean by this that the object of the sermon is always to be stated, or personal appeals for the higher life always made, but that the pulpit theme should always be treated with the higher life in view, so that the impression left, whether a word be said about it or not, should be quickening to the higher life. Our liberal pulpit is often shorn of its religious power by treating subjects which have a rightful place in the pulpit as if they were the grand object of preaching.

Some time ago, I read and copied this passage from a sermon of one of our liberal ministers of fine culture, whom I have good reasons for regarding with personal esteem: "To desire truth, to make it your sole aim and sole ambition, to be willing to accept it at any cost, to be resolute in accepting it only, this is the true spirit of religion: it is the substance of religion."

This is tersely stated. It has a ring of heroism about it to which the hero within us responds. The minister who is not ready to follow the highest truth that is made known

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to him is unworthy the companionship of prophets and martyrs. Our first impulse is, with Ivanhoe, to make the naked blade of our spear ring against the lance point of any Bois-Guilbert who ventures to enter the grand Tournament of Truth against us.

But let us wait a moment, and not be in haste to split our ministerial lance till we assure ourselves it is for this alone we have girt on the gospel armor and become a Christian knight. Are the desire for truth and the acceptance of it at whatever cost the "substance of religion"? Is religion so purely an intellectual affair as this statement implies? Does not real religion consist quite as much in the application of truth to life as in the desire and search for it? Truth "sanctifies," when it is used for casting out evil and enthroning good. Truth makes "free," when it breaks the chains and opens the prison doors of selfishness and sin. We may not overestimate the importance of truth, or the value of truth-seekers in religion; but, in our common ministerial work, we may give to the popular desire for new truth a place so high as to cast into the shade the yet greater importance of applying the truth we already possess to the uplifting of man.

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Alas for our liberal ministry, if it be only another exploring expedition in search of that possibly open sea of Divine Truth on the frozen borders of which so many noble men have left their bones! If I believed that, I should feel very much like leaving the ship and taking to the ice-floes in the hope of finding land somewhere and starting another expedition to rescue the explorers, and bring them back into navigable seas. But I do not think the desire for truth, or the search for it, needful and grand as they are, is the "substance of religion." The substance of religion *includes* right thinking, but in essence it is right living. If truth alone could redeem the world, the good time coming would have come long ago. High thinking is too often divorced from high living. Search for truth belongs to theology. The application of truth to heart and life is religion.

All honor to our religious voyagers after truth! We cannot do without them. They do not always explore the arctic regions. They circumnavigate the globe of thought, and often bring home tropical treasures; but the great every-day work of the ministry is to make every word of God flesh, as Jesus

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did,— not to rest satisfied with searching for truth, but to "use it rather" for the building up of the kingdom of love and brotherhood on earth.

New thought is admirable when it is proved true thought, but we must not be in too great haste to vouch for it. Rev. E. E. Hale is fond of telling the story that a classmate who graduated with him at Harvard took for a thesis "The Established Truths of Science." I have forgotten how many were named, but I remember Mr. Hale said that every one of them had since been exploded.

After listening to a masterly essay by one of our eminent thinkers and scholars on the various schools of thought,— theological, metaphysical, philosophical, from Augustine to Parker,— and hearing him say that the net result to mankind was little more than a clearer conception of the Golden Rule, I felt quite reconciled to my loss in not having been a metaphysician or philosopher, since I inherited the Golden Rule as my Christian birthright.

I repeat, then, that the object of preaching is not speculative, but moral and spiritual. This is the only kind of preaching that wears, even in our liberal Church. Many

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societies have been started among us and run bravely for a time, but soon run out, because the souls of the people were not fed,—because the preaching was so exclusively theoretical, dealing with the thought-problems of the age, and leaving its heart and life untouched. There will always be a few people who like this kind of preaching; and, when others in the congregation begin to drop off, they will tickle the minister's vanity with the suggestion that these uncultured folk cannot appreciate such high ideas. It is only the gods that flourish on ambrosia! In the mean time, the empty churches or halls are closed, and the ground lies fallow, until some one comes with a real evangel to preach,—with real bread from heaven, not all yeast, but bread for the nourishment of the soul's life. Then the withered plant revives again. It is so every time and everywhere, and will be so long as man has a religious nature which craves sustenance and strength.

Many just now are laying great stress on organization. That is good when we first have something vital to organize. All through nature we see that it is life that creates its own organization, not organization

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that creates life. Only let us get real religious life, and that life will organize itself as naturally as life in the buried seed organizes itself for growth and fruit-bearing. Methodism that has spread itself all over the land did not get its life by organization. Having deep religious life, that life created an organization to match,— to express the life, to be to the life what the body is to the soul, a working power. Their organization is iron-clad, to fit their unyielding creed and discipline. This is what makes many of their thoughtful members uneasy. Ours must be flexible, to fit our free thought. But as with them, so with us: life must come first. I do not forget that our mission is to some extent different from that of any other Christian body. We believe in a larger freedom and our idea of salvation is broader and deeper, including the entire manhood, to be lifted out of the animal into the spiritual life.

Like the great "Apostle of Liberty" in the early days, our mission is mainly to the Gentiles,— to those whom the other churches still regard as infidels. Here is our special field; and it is a large one, white for the harvest. But the work to be done in these broad fields is not to make the occupants

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content with their disbelief in Orthodoxy or their doubts of the popular faith; but, joining them on that ground, as Paul joined the Gentiles in repudiating the ceremonials of Judaism, we must present our simple view of Christianity with the same high motive that Paul presented his,— to lift man out of bondage into freedom; not freedom of thought merely, but freedom from the dominion of animalism; freedom from selfishness and sin,— the "glorious liberty of the children of God." This cannot be done by preaching anti-Orthodoxy only, any more than Paul could have planted churches in Gentile cities by preaching anti-ritualism. It was the positive truth Paul taught about Jesus and the new life waked by his life and teaching that laid the foundation of those churches in Gentile lands. He might have preached himself hoarse against the authority of Moses, against ritualistic observances, and *against* everything else that his hearers had no faith in, and they would probably have cheered him loudly, and invited him home to dine. But there would have been no church established,— no organized institution for human uplifting.

Men are never lifted by what they doubt.

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It is what they believe that lifts. Doubt has its uses in clearing away the débris for new foundations, but it is only faith can build the new structure. This is just as true of the liberal Church as any other. Make our negations prominent, and our doom is sealed. We may run for a while, and the floors of our churches may seem quite firm to our tread; but, by and by, down they drop, not from the weight of the audience,—for that, alas! has been growing lighter and lighter,—but because the negation borers have honeycombed every sleeper and sill. Nothing but the teaching of positive truth can build up a church. A lyceum may be kept up for a while with discussions; lecture bureaus may live a few years with music and medleys; but a church of God, a pillar and ground of faith and life, can never be built without positive religious truth,—truth that brings God near and lifts souls into communion with him.

There are errors, old and new, that still need exposing and rebuking. There is a time for this work, and, when the time is ripe, we must not shrink from the dust and grime of the débris: but, to build, we must have positive truth. It is by setting forth with

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persuasive power and earnest conviction the positive side of our liberal faith that we are to make ourselves felt as a redeeming force. Liberalism has brought upon itself the stigma of being a system of negations by neglecting its own *affirmations*. It is we ourselves who have turned our own sweet and heaven-sent doctrines wrong side out, showing to the world only the coarse lining of what we don't believe instead of the divinely woven fabric of our positive faith.

Look for a moment at a few of our leading and prominent doctrines. Is the fatherhood of God a negation? Is the divine sonship of man, as illustrated in Jesus, a negation? Is human brotherhood a negation? Is sin its own sure sorrow a negation? Is goodness its own reward a negation? Is character, the richest fruit of religion, a negation? Is salvation by Christ — by becoming Christlike in spirit and purpose — a negation? Is the future life the sequence and sequel of this a negation? Then who will tell us what positive truths are and where they are to be found? Are there any other truths in Buddhism, Confucianism, or any other Orientalism, so much greater than these that we should turn away from our liberal faith to

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find something more positive and redeeming? We may well rejoice in every indication that the great All-Father has spoken some word of truth to all the nations of the earth, so confirming our faith in the universal Fatherhood. But what concerns us most is not the word spoken to them, unless we find there something higher and better, but the word spoken to us. If this be the highest and best we know, then our mission is to preach it in its positive form, as a living word of the living God committed to our trust.

Oh, if we could only do this, what a power the liberal Church might become! How our "pale negations," as Emerson called them, would fade before the white light and heat of our positive convictions! We do not half believe as yet the glorious truths God has revealed to us. We see them only "as trees walking," not as living forces going forth in the strength of God as redeemers of mankind. Humanity isn't lifted by appeals to the intellect only: we must touch its heart. Our preaching must be not only instructive, but moving. It must rouse the indifferent. It must wake the sleepers. It must call souls out of their graves into the living and loving service of God and man.

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This is the object of preaching. Its subjects, we say again, no man can number. The list is ever enlarging; but its grand object is forever the same, to lift mankind from rational or irrational animals into sons and daughters of the living God.

Students of the Liberal Christian faith, never suffer yourselves to doubt the power of a real Christian ministry. Whether the world needs you or will hear you depends not on what disappointed croakers say of the decadence of the ministry, but on what you are. Let faith in your work decay, and the decadence of *your* ministry is sure. But keep your faith bright and clear in the Eternal Goodness, and the eternal nature of the truths God has given you to speak, and the eternal need of those truths to lift up mankind, and then, be sure, the world will need you, God will need you, and he will find a place for you among his faithful workers for that real kingdom of God, to which, in the joy of your hearts, you have consecrated your lives.

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PASTORAL WORK.

I AM AMONG YOU AS ONE THAT SERVETH.—*Jesus.*

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III.

PASTORAL WORK.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, I am to speak to-day of pastoral work,—a part of ministerial labor to which less and less attention is being paid in these latter days of the Church. If you will look over the admirable courses of lectures given to our theological schools, which have passed into print, you will find them almost wholly on preaching. This shows the drift of the times. I cannot think it a healthy drift. There may be great preachers who are not pastors, but to be a minister is to be something more than a preacher. A preacher is but a voice. A minister is not only a voice, but a hand, a foot, an eye, a heart. It requires much more of a man to be a minister than to be a preacher. More of one's manhood is called into exercise, his sympathies, his affections, his humanity. We have only to remember the object of the Christian ministry to see at once the absolute necessity of this branch of ministerial work.

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That object in general terms, as was said in the last lecture, is to lift the world to a higher plane of thought and life. That can never be done by preaching alone. A great deal may be done in that way when the preaching is true and persuasive. But a voice in the pulpit and an ear in the pew is but a poor conception of a Christian church. I think we must admit Paul's idea is much broader and grander when he compares the church not to a tongue and an ear, but to the entire man, every faculty of humanity being called into requisition, the least important member, as it may seem to us, being absolutely essential to the health and life of all.

The pastor is a shepherd. Pastoral work is the shepherding of the flock. It is not enough to feed them : they must be cared for in other ways, shielded from the weather, changed from one pasture to another, protected from wolves and other ferocious animals, prevented from going astray, and, when one does wander, to seek it in vale and upland, in forest and clearing, until it is found and brought back to the fold.

But, not to dwell on generalities, let us come at once to particulars. You get a

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"call"! — that longed for and yet half-feared thing that has been floating in your thought ever since you commenced your studies. No matter whether it be what is called a *loud* call to a large and rich society, or a low call to a small and poor one, the work, in spirit, and end, and aim, is the same,— to lift those to whom you have been called to minister to a higher plane of thought and life. Of course, you give your first thought to your sermons. That is natural and right. But to stop there is to be only a voice, to be a feeder only, not a shepherd.

Now, what are some of the first things to be done, in order to show your people that you have come among them not as a preacher only, but as a minister? Of course, each minister will have his own way of doing things. But in your own way, using your own methods, you must take early and special pains to get acquainted with your people. Do not wait for ceremony. Take the initiative. Begin at once. Without being officious, in a simple, natural, easy, courteous way, let them see that you have come to be one of them, to share their joys and sorrows and be to them a ministerial friend. In taking a list of the families, be sure to

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include them all, from the daughter just going to be married to the baby in the cradle. And, should there be a maiden aunt or a bachelor uncle, fail not to put them down. Even though they attend no church, put them down on your list, so that, if nobody else shepherds them, you may.

Of your relation to the children and young people, I shall speak more at length in another lecture. I wish to speak now of the golden links on the other end of the chain,— the old people. They should be the special objects of pastoral care, because they are old. The dew of youth has gone. The flower of manhood and womanhood has faded. Most of their early companions have passed on. They are beginning to feel alone. The eye is dim, the ear is dull, the step slow and unsteady; but the old heart is warm, and responds to every word of kindly sympathy. The minister who does not like to call on them has missed his *own high* calling. He may shine in the pulpit, but, if his light does not shine into the homes of the old people to cheer their hearts by tender sympathy, it is not a ray from the central orb. Do not then, I beseech you, do not forget or neglect the old people. Whoever else you forget,

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remember tenderly those who have borne the burden and heat of the day, who live mainly in memory and hope, and who so deeply need and dearly prize a comforting and cheering word from him who has come, not to feed the lambs only, but to shepherd the entire flock.

Remember a true minister is not fastidious. He does not neglect the disagreeable. In your parish calls skip nobody. Know nothing of social distinctions. Ignore all cliques and clans. Show yourself the friend of all. Let your people see at the very beginning that you are there, not to court the best society, indulge your literary tastes, occupy the easy-chairs of your wealthy parishioners, but to work for the higher life of all.

To enlist the sympathy of your parishioners with you in this work, it will be well for you to give notice from the pulpit early in your ministry that, should any one know of a family in trouble of any kind who would be pleased with a visit from a ministerial friend, you would be glad to be informed of it; and I think I would add that it was no matter whether such person or family were connected with the society or not. If they

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have no stated place of worship, and so no claim on any other minister, you would like to have them feel they had a claim on you, as a *minister at large*, to which you would gladly respond.

Remembering how many in almost every community have been alienated from religion by irrational views concerning it, special pains should be taken to search out these people. Seek for good, kind, friendly talks with them, not for argument, but for neighborly conference. Even though they be never won to church attendance, the current of their thoughts may be turned into higher channels and their ideas of religion be changed and enlarged.

There will be found in every field of labor some individuals and families of a very low grade,— intemperate or worse. All the religious societies in the place have given them up, it may be, as hopeless cases. But no case is hopeless to our liberal faith. A human being means God's child, and God's child means a being capable of being lifted. There is a kind of liberalism that is dainty and fastidious and gives unworthy people, as they are called, a wide berth. Believing in the "survival of the fittest," like the priest

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and Levite of olden time, it passes by on the other side, leaving them to their fate. That this sort of dainty religion never touched the hem of Christ's garment, I need not say. It is old Pharisaism gone to seed in modern thought. A religion to lift the world must take hold of the lowest classes. Houses are not lifted by placing jack-screws under the ridge-pole, but under the sills. A minister who fancies there are any individuals or families beneath his notice should read again the old parable of the one lost sheep whose bleating drew the shepherd from the ninety-and-nine in the fold, and ask its meaning. This sort of dilettante, kid-gloved ministry, that attempts to lift the great house of humanity by its ridge-pole, never did accomplish anything yet in the world, and it never can. There must be a human heart in any religion that lifts,—a heart that knows how to feel, not for the "fittest" only, but for the unfittest. That is the Christ heart, that is the ministering heart. It isn't a mere voice in the pulpit on Sunday: it is a sympathetic word on Monday, a helping hand on Tuesday, and all through the week a ministering spirit, serving him first whose need is greatest.

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In almost every community there is at least one hard-headed old sceptic,— one who believes in nothing he cannot touch or see,— who hates the church and the ministry, and who prides himself on his ability to argue against all forms of religion. Do not pass him by. Go to see him, not to argue with him on religion, but to talk about farming, if he is a farmer, or shoemaking, if he is a shoemaker,— anything that you can agree about, even the weather. Let him see that you do not scorn him because he is not a Christian. If you have ever heard anything good of him, tell him of it, and let him see you are his friend. If he is fond of reading, as is most likely, talk to him about books. There you will find common ground on which to stand. Seize on anything which will bring you into friendly relations with him. You may never fairly convert him, but you may soften his feelings. You may, not by argument, but by Christian kindness, make him feel very differently about churches and ministers and religion itself; and you *may*, it is within the range of possibility, win him to the Father's love and service. At all events, try. Try the hardest cases, that not one in the reach of your ministry may ever have

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cause for saying "no man cared for my soul."

You need not fear the jealousy of the more favored families of your flock, whether in wealth or culture, on account of your interest in this class of persons. It will be likely to enlist their sympathy in the same direction, and they will rejoice to know they have a minister who has not come among them for the "loaves and fishes," but, if possible, to do some real good to his fellow-men; and, catching your spirit, you will be surprised to learn how many will be ready to help you in every way possible. They had a good preacher before you came, an excellent sermonizer; but somehow, after a year or two, he left them just about where they were when he came. He was a good *voice*, and they gave him an attentive *ear;* but voice and ear did not seem to do the work of a church. Now a hand, a foot, a heart, have come, they see it was just what they had been waiting for all along without knowing it. In this pastoral work, you will receive more than you give. You will learn the art of applying Christianity to human needs; learn the infinite variety of human dispositions and wants, and get a practical idea of what is

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meant when it is said of Jesus, "He went about doing good."

In this part of your ministry, you will have opened to you most interesting pages of human life, offering the best possible opportunity for studying human nature. If you are frequently puzzled to know what to do with certain characters, you will often be surprised and delighted to find in these less favored classes most beautiful examples of Christian character. You will find bright intellects, too, as well as warm hearts; people with whom you will love to converse; people gifted by nature with sweetness of spirit, generosity, nobleness, and with manners, too, that would grace any society to which a change of circumstances might introduce them. You will often find refreshing companionship where you least expected it, so that you will love to leave your books, when interest flags, and run out among these people for the refreshment you *get* as well as *give.*

But do not stay too long. Long parish calls you will find as unpopular as long sermons. On these calls be sure you carry a good spirit with you. If you chance to be in any way superior, be sure you show it

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by hiding it. Any show of superiority is fatal. None see through that quicker than the intelligent poor. If you *are* superior, they will see it; and it is so much better for them to find it out than to tell them of it, even in the most scholarly way. Bad as anything like arrogance is in the pulpit, it is worse, if possible, in the homes and workshops of the people.

One thing of almost supreme importance in making parish calls is the art of listening. There are, especially among ministers, and more especially among young ministers, twenty good talkers to one good listener. But the good listeners are always popular. We know how it is ourselves. People who keep up a running fire of talk, not stopping for you to answer their questions, are not the most agreeable; nay, they are the bores of society. They may talk ever so well, yet, if the polished auger keeps turning, it hurts. 'Tis true there are silent families in which the minister must do the most of the talking; but even here the few words spoken by the silent ones must be listened to with real, not feigned attention. This is only due courtesy, it is true, but the courtesy of listening is a rare virtue; and it is possible for one to

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pass through an entire course of theological study without learning its value as a ministerial grace.

Should religious subjects be introduced on these social visits? That must be left entirely to the judgment of the minister. Sometimes, when the thoughts run in commonplace but innocent channels, it may be difficult to change to a deeper subject. Then, again, higher thoughts are naturally opened, which invite religious conversation; and, with our ideas of the comprehensiveness of religion, such opportunities will often occur if one is only looking for them. Only let one keep before him in his calls, as in writing his sermons, the end and aim of his ministry, and he will be likely to be guided right. I must say, however, that I think we Unitarian ministers are altogether too shy of speaking directly of religion to our people. We fear we shall be deemed officious or meddlesome, but I believe we shall often find a cordial response to our words. Our people hate *cant*, but not sweet natural religion such as we believe in, as cheerful as the song of birds, and as fragrant as opening flowers.

Your calls upon the sick will at first be

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among your most trying duties. It is very difficult for one of limited experience to speak to those older and wiser than himself. But what the sick and troubled ones need is not discourse, but sympathy. Sometimes the least said gives the greatest comfort. It is not so much what is said, ever, as the way it is said,—the spirit of faith in the Eternal Goodness that goes with it,—that gives peace.

You must not be discouraged by an occasional rebuff. A brother minister told me he once visited a sick man, and after talking with him he asked, "Would you like to have me pray with you?" The sick man coolly replied, "I guess I can do my own praying." That was all right, if he felt so, and one should not be at all disturbed by it. The man was probably afraid of being thought religious, as many are who have imbibed false notions of what real religion is. The minister's question and his own curt reply very likely did him good by starting deeper thought; and the next visit, the ice having been broken, he may have taken great comfort in joining the minister in prayer.

Some years ago, I had among the families in my parish an old man of strong intellect,

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though of narrow gauge, who was a very Sadducee of the Sadducees. He believed in neither angel nor spirit, nor anything else his five senses could not test. But he was honest and outspoken; nay, he took great pride in stating his utter unbelief in spiritual things. He had not been to church for years, and had no idea of ever going again. But that was no reason why I should not visit him, which I did occasionally, though nothing I could say seemed to make any impression on him. At length the old man was taken sick, and likely to die. I went to see him, not to argue with him: I well knew how little good that would do. I went as a friend to sympathize with him in his sickness. I found him serious and thoughtful, with no disposition to argue against the absurdities of religion. He seemed to have passed that way-station he had lingered round so long, and to have entered on the region of serious thought. He said but little. I said but little. I knew my man. I did not ask if I should pray with him. I knew what he thought of that. But as I rose and took his hand to say good-by, both of us feeling, though without saying it, that it was probably the last time, he said hesitatingly, as if

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he did not want to say it, but felt he must, being inwardly impelled, "Mr. Tilden,—I —I—I—wish you would pray with me." It was the soul, the very existence of which he had argued against for years, that found voice at last. It was the cry of a child, who had lived a long life of orphanage, for a Father. But it was only a cry, and in a moment more the old doubting spirit came back,—ruling passion strong in death,—and he said, as if half-ashamed of his request, "But I don't believe anything in it." I took him at his best. I was sure his momentary faith came from his awakened soul craving a Father's arm to lean upon, his swift retreat from the chronic doubt that had tyrannized over him through life; and, dropping on my knees by his bedside, I did pray as best I could, feeling assured that, after all, that cry of the soul for God, just as the light of this world was fading, was a cry "out of the depths," while the apology for it, as though it were a weakness, was but the falling débris of the old scaffolding of doubt that had so long hidden the sight of God from the darkened chambers of his soul.

But these are rare cases. Most people, if they do not ask it, will be only too glad to

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have you pray. Only let it be what Horace Mann, when dying, asked of his friend Fay, "a short, cheerful prayer."

In my own experience with the sick I have found remembered passages of Scripture, informally repeated, no matter how familiar, with a sweet hymn, perhaps, far better than anything I could say out of my own thought.

In comforting sorrow, one must not attempt too much. Occasionally you will find those who seem to close themselves against comfort; your best words will slide off them like rain from a slated roof. They insist that God has dealt with them very cruelly, and they do not want anything said in vindication of his love. He has shown no love to them. They are sure they do not know what they have done to deserve such a trial, etc. There is a good story of an old minister who met such complaining against God by saying coolly, after the complaint had run to the end of its tether, "Well, madam, what are you going to do about it?" A pertinent and healthy question. These are the hardest cases to deal with. They stop the flow of one's sympathies. Perhaps there is no better way of treating this state of mind than persistent silence. Argument

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only adds fuel. Say nothing, throw on no brush, and the fire will soon burn out. These cases, however, are fortunately rare. More generally you will find a tender sense of divine love mingling with the sorrow, and an open heart to any word of comfort that may be given.

It is especially in dealing with sorrow that you will need the art of listening of which I have spoken. The sorrowing have a story to tell. It is a sacred story. It is written in tears on the fleshly tablets of the heart. Every little particular about the last sickness, suffering, the last word, the agony, and the sweet smile, is engraven so distinctly on the memory, it *must* be told,— told again and again. You must listen to it every time. It is one of nature's own methods of relief. Never interrupt it. Listen, and listen in sympathy. Speak no word till the story is through, and even then let the words be few. Silent sympathy will often do what words cannot to heal the wounds of the heart.

I recall a very intelligent and lovely parishioner who on my visits would speak very freely of her various experiences. She generally did most of the talking. Indeed, I seemed to myself to say very little; but that

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little, with sympathetic listening, gave her so much comfort that she often spoke in the most grateful terms of the blessing of my visits to her. But it was mainly the telling of her griefs to a listening ear that opened her soul for divine comfort to flow in.

I must say a word of funeral services, as they are the most trying for young ministers. One's first funeral service is generally an occasion to be remembered. It is only experience in sorrow, and with sorrow, that can overcome this first natural embarrassment and enable one to be calm and natural. But there is this to be said for the comfort of young ministers. Their very embarrassment may sometimes give a sympathetic power to their words which the confidence of long experience may miss. Do not, then, be discouraged by this natural shrinking from the service. It is a good sign. It indicates a tender and sensitive nature, and only such can comfort sorrow.

In this service do not read too much Scripture. It only confuses the mind. Most ministers now use some manual. Do not read too much from it. A few choice selections are sufficient. One or two very choice bits of poetry are well; but there is real

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danger, nowadays, of this being overdone. Let the remarks, if any, be few and simple. Enter on no argument for immortality. Take it for granted, as Jesus did. Avoid giving character, save where you know, and even then better say too little than too much. Try to put yourself as far as possible in the place of the afflicted ones. A brother minister told me he was once present at a funeral where Father Taylor of Boston officiated. A poor woman had parted with her husband, and was left in all the bitterness of lonely widowhood. Father Taylor's first words of prayer were: "O Lord, we are a widow. Comfort us;" taking the burden of sorrow upon himself, sharing it with the stricken one, and so helping her to bear it.

There is a great deal in putting one's self in a condition to conduct a funeral service. Before attempting it, it is well to ascend the mount, and listen to what is said there. Rise, if possible, into a condition to give comfort. Read something elevating, that you may be lifted into the realm of the Eternal. Read, not so much for anything to say as to climb the mount of vision where you can see the Unseen and hear His voice, that must speak in you and through you if

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you would be a comforter. In my earlier ministry, I used to find Mountford's "Euthanasy" a very helpful book. It was a sort of spiritual bath that opened the pores of the soul to the atmosphere of faith and hope.

To pass from the funeral to the wedding, as we ministers have to do so often, with short space between, let me say: First of all, as soon as you are settled, make yourself acquainted with the marriage laws of the State in which you are located. Consult the statutes for yourself. Trust nothing to hearsay; and be sure you read "the revised statutes," for marriage laws are ever changing. In those States where certificates are required, it is not uncommon for the happy groom to put his generous or otherwise fee into the certificate, so that the minister on opening it may experience a pleasant surprise. It is better, therefore, to ask for the certificate, to see if all is right, before the time of service, lest in opening it before the assembled company the fee should drop on the floor or force you to dispose of it in some conspicuous and awkward way.

It is well always, if possible, to see the couple a few minutes before the ceremony, to learn if they wish to use the "ring" and

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to answer any questions they may desire to ask about the service. Only a few young people will know how to stand to be married. Why should they? They have had no experience. It was not taught in the common school, college, or mechanic's shop; and, if you do not tell them, they will be liable to begin life the wrong side of each other. Always, then, let it be known that the bride must stand next the groom's heart, which is supposed to be on his left side. I knew a minister, however, who all through his life gave the best evidence that his heart was in the right place, though it was found, after death, to be on the *wrong* side, that is on his *right* side. But it is safe to follow the commonly received physiology, and to instruct the happy groom that, as he must always strive to keep on the right side of his wife, he should be sure to begin on the right side, and take her close to his heart.

As to the service, I am not aware that any State prescribes any particular form. This is left entirely to the person officiating, save with the Catholics and Episcopalians, who have each a church form. There are suitable forms also in our Liberal Service books for such as like them, though I think most

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of our ministers prefer to use their own. We permit entire freedom.

As the Episcopal marriage service is dignified and stately, and withal rather fashionable, you will now and then be called to marry those who will prefer that service; but you had always better look it over carefully before using it, so as to drop out all not truthful to the occasion. If the generous groom really means to endow his bride with "all his worldly goods," it is well; but, if that be only a form of words, he should not be encouraged to use them. But, whatever the form, it should be dignified and serious, as befits the occasion; not so hurried as to seem trivial, nor so long as to be wearisome. Addresses on the nature of marriage are not likely to be appreciated at the wedding. A brief word, if any, is enough, letting the prayer speak the deep solemnity of that act by which the union of hearts, already registered in heaven, is sealed on earth.

I have included funerals and weddings under pastoral duties because these occasions of sorrow and joy call for the same sympathy and personal interest demanded in all other pastoral work. That work covers a wide field and one of vast importance. If

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the drift of the times be to ignore this part of ministerial work, then resist the drift: out with your oars, and row up stream to a higher level. Do not listen to that seductive suggestion, born of pride and self-conceit, that *you* were called to *preach;* that, while there are those who are fit only for pastors, your mission lies in the pulpit! Perhaps it does, but it is not quite safe to assume it at the beginning. Time and your congregations will decide that. But if you would be something more than a preacher, if you wish to be a minister, a Christian minister, working in the spirit of him who has given his name to the religion we love, do not, I beseech of you, content yourselves with being a voice. Be an eye to see the needs of all classes, especially the poor and lowly. Be a hand, a helping hand extended to all needy ones. Be an ear to listen to the cry of distress or the call for spiritual comfort. Be a foot to find its way to the poorest as well as the richest parishioners. Be a heart touched with the spirit of him who took a sinning and suffering world into his arms, and found his meat and drink in lifting humanity to a higher plane of thought and life.

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SUNDAY-SCHOOLS AND GUILDS.

I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD.— *Jesus.*

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IV.

SUNDAY-SCHOOLS AND GUILDS.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN: In continuing the subject of pastoral work, I wish to speak to-day of the minister's relation to the children and youth of his society, especially through the Sunday-school and the various organizations for young people that are coming more and more into use.

There was a time, a time I have cause to remember, when the relation between the young people and the minister of the parish was very distant, and more repellent than attractive. The boys and girls saw their minister once a week in the old, high pulpit, under the mysterious sounding-board, where he seemed in constant peril, or at the close of the school term on examination day,— he was always on the school committee,— where his criticism of juvenile scholarship and behavior, however well intended, was not always promotive of intimacy; or on his annual, biennial, or triennial visits, when to be out of sight was to be in real good luck. Oppor-

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tunities for close acquaintance were like angels' visits only in one particular, they were few and far between. It was not strange, therefore, that we boys had no special longing for ministerial society.

I remember one day seeing our minister in the road, coming toward me, and rather than meet him I jumped over the wall and cut across the field, as if on an urgent errand. It was not the minister's or the boy's fault, but the fault of the times. Even parents were distant from their children. They loved them just as well as parents do now, but they did not show it. There were many parents, when I was young, who never thought of kissing their children after they were babies. Indeed, the heredity may be observed in some families still. But a great change has taken place. Children are no longer afraid of their minister. They would sooner jump a wall to meet than to avoid him. They feel he is their friend, and love to be noticed by him.

No doubt, the inauguration of the Sunday-school, which in our parishes is not as old as I am, has done much toward bringing the minister and young people more closely together. The growing sociability of our

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parishes has furthered this intimacy. In the old country parish where I grew up, or down, according to circumstances, we never had a social meeting in the church, of any kind. Anything like a supper in the church, save the Lord's Supper, would have been deemed a sacrilege; an entertainment, a desecration; an amateur drama, the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet.

But the world moves, if not always in the right direction. We ventured finally on a picnic of the Sunday-school in the *woods*. "God's first temples" were not so sacred as the old wooden meeting-house, and not so out of keeping with every-day pleasures. The old embankment against a good time thrown up by the pick and spade of our Puritan fathers once broken through, a flood of festivities, all more or less culinary, have rushed in, making church kitchens, dining-rooms, and theatrical platforms as essential to a modern church as pulpit, organ, or choir. We have easily and naturally run into the opposite extreme; and now, happily for us, the pendulum is beginning to swing back, and adjust itself to the more important attractions that make themselves felt in time.

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In speaking of a minister's relation to his Sunday-school, I wish to say first, that there are many questions concerning this relation that no one can answer for another. Whether the minister shall superintend his school or teach a Bible-class, whether he shall make an address every Sunday or once a month or once a year, are questions which depend on circumstances. It may happen that some member of the parish will make a better superintendent than the minister, will have a happier faculty for addressing children, or even make a Bible-class more profitable to the average pupil, some ministers being more skilful in trimming the Bible vines than in gathering the grapes. All such questions of the precise relation he shall hold to his Sunday-school, the just what he shall do, and the just how he shall do it, must be left to his own judgment, with "advice and consent of council." The one thing he must make sure of is that he prove himself a real shepherd of his Sunday-school flock.

Shepherd! That was a favorite word of Jesus. "I am the good shepherd." "I know my sheep, and am known of mine." "Feed my lambs." I know the criticism

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that is sometimes made on "shepherd" and "sheep." These words, it is said, are inapplicable to the relation of a minister to his charge in our modern churches, where all are on terms of perfect equality and the minister is but a fellow-helper of his people; not perceiving that the thought of Jesus was not of authority, but shepherding, of tender watch and care. "He calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. They know his voice, and follow him. A stranger's voice will they not follow, but will flee from him; for they know not the voice of strangers." What can express more impressively and tenderly the power of a kindly personal interest? If dumb creatures can be drawn in this way by a constant care and love to know the voice that calls, the hand that feeds, the mind that leads beside still waters and along green pastures, now through the dark ravine, now up the rugged steeps to verdant shelves on the mountain side, how much more may the equal children of a common father be moved by mutual care and love! When a church of its own free choice invites one in whom it trusts to come as an equal brother, to be a religious friend and helper, a shepherd, not of sheep, but of

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souls, equal children of God with himself, how much deeper the need of his personal interest and affection, and how much broader the influence on natures as completely responsive as his own!

This shepherding of the Sunday-school flock is of paramount importance. If his sheep are ever to know his voice, and follow him, so that he, too, can say with the good shepherd, "I know my sheep, and am known of mine," he must begin with the lambs. He must become personally acquainted with them. They are his spiritual children. They belong to the church household, the household of faith. They must not only be fed with healthy and nutritious food, but they must be shepherded by personal interest, sympathy, and encouragement. Their special tendencies and drifts must be learned as far as possible, that they may be helped to see their special temptations and to feel the power of noble incentives.

I do not think it possible to overestimate the importance of this personal influence, when it is sincere, simple, unobtrusive, flowing from a wise brain and a loving heart. It is next the influence of a true father or mother. Nay, sometimes it may be greater;

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for the very familiarity and often imperfection of home influence, mixed as it is with petty annoyances, may fail, when the judicious, tender, sympathetic encouragement of a true minister, who has made himself worthy of the child's respect and trust, may take hold of the young mind and heart with persuasive and uplifting power.

I suppose we shall all agree that, however important it may be in this critical and inquiring age to give our children and young persons rational views of the Bible, its real value and use, the religious opinions of other denominations as well as our own, some knowledge of Bible lands and customs, of Christian history, its great epochs and frequent departures from the simplicity of Christ, still the great thing of paramount importance to be done is to wake a real interest in the religious life, a real desire to live as a true child of God. Until this is done, little is done. One may know all about the latest criticisms of the Bible, and very little of its central truths; all about the geography of the Holy Land, and very little of what constitutes a holy spirit; something even of the Ten Great Religions, and little or nothing of what *one* religion, the one

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into which he was born, may do to ennoble thought and life and lift the soul into communion with God.

The first duty, therefore, of the minister to his Sunday-school is simply and purely religious,— to start religious thought in the child's mind, thought of duty, thought of right, thought of a divine life, and what it means, and why it is called divine, and then to choose that life as the highest life one can live; to put it first, because it is first, the only kind of life that is really worth living. This may not be done at once, though there are very sudden openings sometimes to the glory of this higher life. But this must be sought *first*, and, when the religious life is once started, then all the legitimate instructions of the school will come in easily and naturally as a stimulus to this life. But the essential thing to be aimed at first and last is life, not knowledge merely, but life.

Now, although there are a variety of ways by which this higher life in the soul is started, and although it sometimes seems to start itself in the midst of untoward circumstances, for God rules over chaos as well as cosmos, still there is no influence more likely to be effective than the personal influ-

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ence of a truly religious friend, such as the minister is supposed to be to every child in his Sunday-school. There is no one else who sustains precisely the relation to them which he does. He is recognized as their religious teacher. They expect from him, or ought to, religious instruction. He may join them in all their innocent amusements, and get all the closer to them for that; but he is with them for something higher than amusement. He is their spiritual shepherd. He must take note of the moral atmosphere around them, and call them into the fold of his confidence and protection when the sky is stormy and the wolves are out. With only a pulpit, an occasional Sunday-school address, an entertainment acquaintance, the minister cannot gain this confidence or exert this protecting and guiding power. A minister who has not missed his calling carries with him an atmosphere it is wholesome for a child to breathe. He teaches not alone by what he says, but by what he is. If he has a happy, joyous nature, all the better. But, if that is all he has, he is not the kind of shepherd the lambs need. They will not know his voice when he calls them up the perilous steeps; and, when he cries, "Wolf!"

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they will think him only in fun. But let him have, away down below all his good cheer and joyousness, the solid base of a pure, high-toned, noble character, one that naturally wins honor and trust, and then personal contact will always bless. Virtue will go out of him. There will be healing in his garment's hem; and his word and life together will create an influence that will hardly fail of lifting the young who love and trust him to the higher life.

But it has to be confessed that the Sunday-school, as generally conducted, has not fulfilled its early hopes. Great stress was laid upon it at first, as the nursery of the church. It was regarded as a primary school in which the children and young people would be instructed and nurtured under church influence, and in due time graduated into full fellowship with the worship and work of the church. This hope has been realized only to a very limited extent. Occasionally a few of the older members, generally the young ladies, seldom a young man, have joined the church. The bond of union between the school and the church, so fondly expected, has proved a missing link.

Besides this, even attendance on the regu-

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lar church worship, instead of being promoted by the Sunday-school, has slowly, but steadily declined. I began to feel this painfully during the latter years of my ministry, and tried earnestly to resist it, but was only partially successful. I found my brother ministers were complaining of the same thing, the non-attendance of the Sunday-school pupils on the morning service of worship.

Many things naturally conspired to produce this state of things. Parents thought that one session a day was enough for their children. Twice a day was too fatiguing, and would only give a distaste for worship when they grew up. The children, following the prevailing idea, thought so too. This was strengthened by well-meant but foolish suggestions that the Sunday-school was the children's church, and, if they attended that regularly, it was all that could be asked. And so, instead of that sweet, natural, vital union between the Sunday-school and the church, so fondly anticipated, the result was disunion, separation between parents and children, till in many of our large city churches, with large Sunday-schools, scarcely a child was to be seen in the

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worshipping congregation. This evil was not confined to the city churches. I preached one Sunday for the minister of a large, rich country parish, with a flourishing Sunday-school, held in the morning. Just as I reached the church door, the school in the vestry adjoining was dismissed. And, while the bell for the morning service was ringing and the people were going in, the pupils of the school, children and young people, marched in a body directly by the church door, as if they had no more to do with the worshipping congregation than if those going in, instead of being their fathers and mothers, were Greek Catholics, worshipping in an unknown tongue. This is measurably true, and in pretty large measure, all round. The direct result is painfully apparent. Most young people, leaving the school without having formed habits of church attendance, are all adrift. They may become good or bad subjects for missionary labors, but with no interest whatever in the church in whose Sunday-school they were instructed. I have been amazed to find in parishes I have visited so many young people, especially young men, who, in leaving the Sunday-school, left all interest in Christian in-

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stitutions, and went to swell the number of what is called the "unchurched," a most unfit phrase to describe them, since they were never churched. Just there has been the difficulty. Our church school has never churched the children. It has only Sunday-schooled and then dropped them, to be looked after by the street missionaries. In a very few parishes this drift of the times may have been resisted, and the beautiful old custom of children worshipping with their parents be still continued. But these exceptions are so rare as to confirm beyond a doubt the failure that all deplore.

Very likely it is this failure in the practical working of our Sunday-schools that has led of late years to the formation of Clubs, Guilds, and various associations to interest the young people of the parish and win them to the worship and work of the church. Some of these have been very successful. The plans are various and crude as yet, but under earnest and reverent guidance we have much to hope from them. As these organizations are in their infancy, and rapidly growing in favor, it will be well for you all to become thoroughly acquainted with those which have proved most helpful.

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They have thus far been too purely intellectual in their character, but they are improving. One who has been very successful with his church guild told me that, in making out a list of subjects for study and discussion, he began with certain well-known public men in whom he thought the young people would be interested, coming upon the more purely religious themes gradually, fearing how they might take. The list was submitted to the guild for revision, and it was voted *unanimously* to let the great men wait and take up at once the religious themes. He said he felt rebuked. We have too little confidence in the religious side of human nature. Agassiz used to say that children were born naturalists. Only present natural science in a simple, natural way, and it is sure to interest them. So we, with our views of religion, should say with emphasis what we only timidly assert, that children are born religious as they are born intellectual and moral. The germ of all that is to be is in them; and we may always make the appeal to the higher nature with confidence, if we make it simply and on the plane they have reached.

But, whatever organizations we use, the

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personal interest of the minister is always supreme. It is the contact of mind with mind, soul with soul, that does more than anything else. A single kind, tender, loving word from the minister showing a real interest in John, or James, or Alice, a good confidential talk with them about what they intend to do in life, a letter of introduction to an employer or minister of the church in the place where they are to make their first venture, a caution against the perils of city life, and country life, too, an uplifting book, with the minister's name on the fly-leaf,— these and the like may often form a tie of influence which shall give an upward tendency to the whole character.

Should our liberal churches ever adopt a "Confirmation Service" which shall be to us, in spirit and intent, what the confirmation of young persons is to the Episcopal Church, as I fondly hope they will, that would directly and naturally open the way to this personal conference with the young on religious themes I deem so important. It would help them to take a stand before the world for God and duty and a divine life. Such a service has always seemed to me rational and in perfect accord with our ideas of human nat-

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ure and Christian nurture. It would bring the minister face to face and heart to heart with the youth of his flock. It would take from religious conversation with the young all appearance of impertinence or intermeddling, since, with that rite in view, it would be expected that the minister would come very close as a religious counsellor and friend. I think something like this may come when we rise to see and feel its need. But we are not to wait for this. Till we get it, we must do the best we can without it.

You may find in your first parish only a Sunday-school, nothing more. Be not too hasty in urging Club or Guild. Wait till there seems to be a real demand. You may be able so to inspire the Sunday-school with life as to need no other organization. By breathing your own earnest soul into it, you may make it do all the work and answer all the purpose of Club and Guild. Do not adopt any of the new organizations because they are fashionable, but because you see their need.

Let me give you an illustration of what may be done with the old method. I met one day, in Boston, an acquaintance from one of the seaboard towns near where I was

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born. He told me some of their parish experiences. Their old church — I was present, as a boy, at its dedication — was on a hill overlooking the broad fields of marsh which gave the town its name, Marshfield. The parish, like many another, had run the gauntlet of a ministerial dispensation which had left it bruised and broken. Arm's length Sunday supplies, and weekly pastorates whose only virtue was their brevity, had left them stranded, high up upon the beach, to wait for spring tides. They came at last in the person of an old minister of fine culture, fair ability, and through and through a Christian gentleman.* He had felt the storms of life. He knew what trial meant, and how to value sunshine when it broke through the cloud. The people liked his preaching. It came home to their daily lives. It gave them something to think about during the week. They asked him to stay with them as their minister. He consented. But he was not content with preaching to them on Sunday. He went to their homes, became acquainted with parents and children. As he lived what he preached, they soon came to love him. He went in and out before them as a gentle

* Rev. Asarelah M. Bridge.

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shepherd, calling the lambs of his flock by name, and leading them to Sunday-school and the service of worship. The flats of indifference began to disappear. The tides of a new, fresh interest flowed in. Every week they rose higher and higher, till at last every creek and ditch in the parish, long dry, were filled flush with religious interest. And all this, not because the minister was young, or smart, or eloquent, or conservative, or radical, but because he was consecrated to his work, loved it, loved his people, and won them to a religious interest by that personal influence which comes from personal contact and personal devotion to one grand object. And when, at last, the death angel kissed the good man for his faithful service, and he rose, the whole parish mourned as for a father whose heart's desire while with them was that "they might have life, and have it more abundantly."

This illustrates the relation I would have the minister sustain to the parish and whatever organizations may be used for the nurture of the Christian life. He can superintend his school or not, as he deems best or as circumstances seem to demand. He can teach all he knows in the Bible class or any

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other classes. He can introduce all the new features of worship or instruction he deems edifying, or, distrusting change, he may give his strength to clothing the old with new power. But, if he would be a true shepherd of his flock, he must be able to say, "I know my sheep, and am known of mine."

But, you may ask, how is one who preaches to five hundred or a thousand every Sunday, who has a Sunday-school of seven hundred, three-fourths of them Germans and a fourth of the other fourth Jews, to form this intimate acquaintance you recommend? I grant the impossibility. But there are probably *some* of you who will not have quite so large a congregation as that at first, or quite so large a Sunday-school. There are great preachers, and there are useful ministers not great. The great preachers are few. We can count them on our ten fingers, in the largest denomination. One hand would abundantly suffice for our Unitarian Church. We may well honor the great preacher. He is a great power in the world. With good doctrine, he is a great power for good. He will draw his large audiences whenever and wherever he preaches. The power is inborn. Culture may perfect, but cannot create it. It is a

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gift of God, and happy they who use it for human uplifting. But, if only a few can look with any confidence to becoming great preachers, we all may aspire to be good ministers. Most of the churches now waiting for you are not large, their Sunday-schools are not large, so that what is impossible to the popular preacher may be quite possible to the minister; and it is to us ordinary ministers of ordinary parishes that my remarks are meant to apply.

Even here there are some difficulties. There are some ministers, like myself, who find it hard to call children by name. It has always troubled me. But this is one of my defects which, if I were young once more, I should try desperately to remedy. I almost envy those to whom it comes easy, for there is a mighty power in it. At all events, this seems to me the ideal relation of a minister to his young people; and, difficult as it may be, he should seek earnestly and persistently to make the ideal real.

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PULPIT SERVICES.

FERVENT IN SPIRIT, SERVING THE LORD.—*Paul.*

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V.

PULPIT SERVICES.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN: I am to speak in this lecture of the services of the pulpit. The pulpit is often called the minister's throne. If this means only that it is the place of his greatest power and influence, it may be true. But I confess I do not like the figure. It is too kingly and authoritative to fit the Christ idea of the minister's office and work. The Christian pulpit, worthily filled, is a mighty power; but it is not a throne for issuing decrees or announcing edicts. "I am among you," said Jesus, "as one that serveth." This is the high office of the minister. He is not to govern, but to serve; not to command, but to win. He is not a priest. The old priesthood passed away when the ministry came. He is simply a fellow-helper in the divine life. All pulpit offices, therefore, represent only different forms of service.

Think a moment of the character of that

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service. It is peculiar. There is no other like it; none that makes such a demand on the higher nature. It is not material, but spiritual service, such service as one mind may render another mind, one heart another heart, one soul another soul. It is to lead in worship. It is to awaken and express reverential gratitude, thanksgiving, penitence, aspiration, love of God and man. It is to make the divine presence felt as a living, present power in the soul. It is to voice the conscience, couch the inward eye, make eternal realities felt, duty commanding, the soul supreme, the voice of God real; to show the glory and blessedness of the higher life, the life hidden in God and consecrated to the service of man; to make the greatness of the humblest life felt; to strengthen faith and brighten hope in things unseen and eternal; to comfort sorrow and win from sin; to establish in virtue; to help all in feeling they are the real children of God, and heirs together of the life eternal; that all life is discipline and schooling; that we are here to rise and help our fellows rise out of evil into good, out of hate into love, out of self-seeking into self-denial, till earth is lifted to heaven, and the real kingdom of God comes.

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Such being the nature and object of the pulpit ministry, the most important preparation for filling worthily its offices is apparent to all: it is internal and spiritual. Not that externals are unimportant. A good voice, well trained for all emergencies, ease of manner, self-possession, power to think on one's feet in the presence of upturned faces, and to express one's thoughts in fitting words, are of great importance and worth very earnest cultivation.

But I will take it for granted that in your studies here you have given due attention to all these external things. My word is, Do not trust to them. Do not think much about them. The real value of all such training depends largely upon forgetting it as soon as you enter the pulpit. To remember it is to cripple your power. To show you remember it may open the eyes, but will close the ears and hearts of those you wish to reach. Sometimes the graces of elocution hinder rather than help. It is all over with a man in the pulpit when he shows the least touch of vanity. The simpler and more natural he is, the surer he always is to get a response to his words. It is this simplicity and naturalness that insure variety in

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pulpit services; for what is natural to one is often very unnatural to another. It is natural to some to speak in a quiet, conversational way; and this may be the best pulpit style. I think it is most generally liked. But this method, when it is not natural, is hard to acquire; and it is doubtful whether it is worth acquiring. If one naturally has a way of *speaking* somewhat different from his way of *talking*, more dignified, even if it suggests declamation, he had better be true to *himself*, be natural, than to try so hard to imitate what he may regard as a better style as to spoil his own. Indeed, imitation, even of the best, is sure to spoil. Each man has a way of speaking as peculiar to himself as the color of his eyes or the tone of his voice. If he has natural defects in speaking, of course they are to be corrected, if possible; but the way of speaking that is natural to him, born in him, a part of his being,—that is the method for him, that is himself: all else is that other man he is trying to imitate.

Then, too, naturalness is so near akin to sincerity that, where one is lacking, the other is always brought under suspicion, however unjustly. Simplicity of manner, sincerity

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of purpose, a living interest in the service, a soul touched with religious enthusiasm,—these, over and above all outward graces, are the best preparation for all the services of the Christian pulpit.

These services in our simple congregational form of worship may be considered under the three heads of Prayer, Reading, Sermon.

First, Prayer. This is the most difficult to speak of, as it is the deepest and most spiritual part of the service. It gives tone and color to all the rest. When it is simple and fitting, it puts souls in tune for worship, lifts them, opens them for the descent of the Spirit. If there are those in our churches who care less for the prayer than the sermon, there are others who care less for the sermon than the prayer; and these are not the least intellectual, either. I knew a venerable minister in Boston, a man of rich and varied culture, whose whole life had been spent in the higher realms of thought, who told me he went one afternoon to hear one preach whom he loved, and that the opening prayer, only a single sentence, so filled and satisfied his soul that he felt as if he needed nothing more. That prayer opened heaven to him,

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and the angels of comfort descended. There are weary and heavy-laden hearts in all our congregations, tired, disappointed, sorrowing hearts, who often get more from the prayer than the sermon. Parker's prayers, taken down fresh and warm, just as they fell — or rose, rather — from his lips, not only lifted those who heard them, but, if they have not been spread as widely as his discourses, have brought comfort and peace to many hearts and homes.

But glad hearts, as well as sad ones, also feel the need of some voice in communion with Heaven, through which they can tell their gratitude and aspiration. Even those who seldom pray in words for themselves like to join in a prayer that makes them feel, if only for the time, the nearness of God and the reality of things unseen. To drop prayer from our service would be virtually to drop God and religion. If either the prayer or the sermon be dropped, let it be the sermon. We can better spare the homily than the devotion. But we need not spare either: we need them both and will hold on to them both, seeking to make the prayer a preparation for the sermon by letting in the light of heaven upon that human life of which the sermon is to treat.

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With us, prayers are usually spoken, not read. Printed forms of prayer have their uses, and to those educated to them may be very helpful. The drift in many of our churches of late is to introduce them as a part of the service. While there may be no objection to their limited use, there are very serious objections to their ever taking the place of the spoken prayer. We must hold on to the spontaneous prayer, the prayer that is not a "vain repetition," against which Jesus warned, but the real, fresh, immediate communion of the soul with the living God in company with all who have met to keep holy time together.

And this leads me to say that the prayer of the minister should not be *for* the people, as if he were a priest offering sacrifices in their behalf, but *with* the people, as one of them, a ministering brother, sharing all their joys and sorrows, feeling all their burdens, and conscious of the same wants, the same need of heavenly grace. This makes the prayer not the prayer of one for all, but the prayer of all voiced by one.

Of the preparation for this service I venture no counsel. Each one must learn from himself how best to find the spirit without

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which he only uses words of prayer, but does not pray. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth." Even so is every one born of the spirit of prayer. Sometimes it delayeth its coming, and we woo it in vain. The tide has gone out, and left us stranded on the beach. And then, again, it will rise and fill mind and heart with its refreshing from the eternal sea. I know of no better preparation than to wait on God, willing to take what is given, remembering that our seasons of dearth may sometimes be worth more to us as discipline than our seasons of refreshing.

Second, Reading. That there is no just appreciation of the importance of good reading as a pulpit grace is painfully apparent. I am no elocutionist, and cannot speak of it professionally, but only from the standpoint of that common sense which belongs to unprofessional humanity. 'Tis often said that we ministers are, as a general thing, miserable readers. It may be so; but, then, opinions vary as to what good reading is. Some like a showy, elocutionary style, that rolls the *r*'s and makes each syllable snap with distinctness,—a style that calls attention to

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itself. While others prefer a simple, quiet method that makes one forget all about the manner and think only of the matter, the subject, the thought. This is plainly the common-sense method; the reading common-sense people best like. This method invites variety. It has no artificial rules. It would not have all persons read the same thing in the same way. Years ago, graduates of Cambridge Theological School were recognized wherever they went to preach by what was called the "Cambridge tone." Just what it was it might be difficult to tell, but easy to perceive. However proper the tone, it was a pity that all should have had it. Even less propriety with more variety would have been better. It is as great a piece of folly to make all read alike as to frown or smile alike. We must let Nature have her play in reading as in speaking. Then we get natural variety instead of cultivated uniformity.

To make every variety of reading good, it is absolutely important first to master the thought, make it one's own, then give it out just as one would speak it if it were his own thought freshly given. Neither Scripture nor hymn would ever fail to be rendered naturally, understandingly, and impressively,

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if this were done. Narrative would be read as one would tell it; parable, as one would relate the story; and the beatitudes or the winged thoughts of Isaiah, as one would render them who had been on the mount of vision. Heedless, careless, indifferent reading of Scripture or hymns, such as is often heard, is unpardonable. Blunders are excusable: they will happen sometimes in the best of readers; but a negligent, newspapery way of reading in the pulpit is utterly inexcusable. Thought is just as much needed in good reading as in good speaking.

Some are falling into the way of reading only the first line or first verse of the hymn. "What is the use," it is said, "when it is to be sung?" No use, certainly, when it is read with no appreciation of its meaning. But, when the soul of the hymn takes possession of the soul of the reader, then the reading is the fittest preparation for the fullest enjoyment of its musical rendering. I counsel you not to give up the reading of the hymns to be sung. It is no vain repetition. Seek rather so to voice the thought of the hymn as to make the reading, as well as the singing, musical and uplifting.

The selection of Scriptural reading is a

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matter of great importance. It should be made with painstaking care. Not all of the Bible can be profitably read in church. Judgment must be used in selecting such passages as lift the soul into the spirit of worship or instruct in the principles of righteousness. It is very important to know how to skip in reading Scripture, what to omit as well as what to read, where to stop as well as where to begin. Jesus gives us a notable example of knowing where to stop in his reading from the prophet Isaiah in the synagogue at Nazareth. He opened the book, and found the place where it is written, "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." There he stopped; but, if we turn to the passage quoted, we find no period there, only a comma, the prophet adding "*and the day of vengeance of our God.*" But Jesus did not come to preach vengeance; that was no part of his mission. So he stopped short, converting a comma into a period, because

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the thought with which he wished to close was not of vengeance, but of "the acceptable year of the Lord."

With the old-fashioned view of the Bible, regarding it all as plenarily inspired, the idea of skipping anything, or of leaving out "vengeance" where it chanced to be in good company, seemed, of course, irreverent and wrong; but with such an example before us, and our idea of the value of the Scriptures being in the help they render in living a divine life, we deem it perfectly right to select such as take us where we are and lift us higher.

In some of our churches the Scriptures of other faiths and other nations are sometimes introduced, not as a substitute, but as auxiliary to our own. There is no impropriety in this. We have done the same thing virtually, ever since we began to sing hymns and psalms in addition to the Psalter. At first only the Bible psalms were sung. Then free translations of those psalms into quite uninspired verse. Then, breaking entirely from the old temple hymn-book, we introduced hymns of Watts, Doddridge, Wesley, and a host of other poets, till now every Protestant sect has its hymn-book of modern as

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well as ancient poetry, which it uses as constantly as its Scriptures, with no thought of any impropriety. Why may not a good and noble sentiment from Buddha or Confucius be as properly read as from Wesley, Longfellow, or Whittier?

But while reading from other Scriptures than our own is only carrying a little farther what we have been doing for many years, and while there may be no objections to it when the selections are really grand and noble, still it had better be done with economy and caution. A new thing is very apt to be run into the ground. I have heard church readings so heavily laden with Orientalisms as to leave a stranger in doubt whether we were Buddhists or Christians. This is a mistake. It is blessed to know that God has spoken to other of his children than Jews and Christians, and quite well at times to let our people see and hear the pure and elevating thoughts born of other faiths and climes. But our own blessed old Bible is so rich in thoughts that lift the soul to God and call it out in love to man that we really do not seem to need a very large amount of foreign Scripture to make our service spiritually edifying; not, at least, till

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we become better acquainted ourselves, and make our people better acquainted, with the mines of wealth in our own Bible.

In selecting Scripture for pulpit reading, thought should be given to quantity as well as quality. There is danger of reading too much as well as too little. It confuses the mind. A few simple, clear, uplifting passages, or a single Bible story or parable, is better far than a miscellaneous jumble of the choicest sentiments. But I must not dwell on this. My counsel is, if you are moved to introduce other Scripture than our own, do not be so generous with it as to crowd out that old familiar word which fed our fathers and mothers, and is still nourishing the Christian world.

Third, Sermon. Of the construction of the sermon, important as that is, I am not to speak. Whether it shall be written and read from the manuscript, or spoken from a brief, or only a preparation of thought without note, are questions you have already discussed, and possibly made up your minds about. All I have to say is, Be not afraid to change your mind, if you see cause. If you have decided on written sermons as on the whole best suited to your mental structure

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and capacity, and yet find that you fail to hold the people, and are apt to get prosy, do not cling so persistently to your pet method as to spoil your pulpit power. Feel free to try some other way, any other that will more surely get the ears of the people, and interest them in your theme. One of our most accomplished extemporaneous preachers, who during the most of his ministry never wrote a sermon, began by using a carefully prepared manuscript. Failing in this, he threw aside his paper, and became distinguished for his affluence of thought and fluency of speech.

It is never too late to adopt this method successfully, if one has the gift for it. I have in mind a personal friend, still the honored and beloved pastor of the same church where he was ordained forty-six years ago. Through the first half of his ministry, he wrote and read his sermons. Whether he thought himself growing prosy, and suspected that his people thought so too, I know not. But for some reason he suddenly dropped his manuscript, and began speaking to his people. There was a freshness and directness in his speech that pleased them. The change was equally refreshing to him-

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self. It gave more time for reading and the study of collateral subjects. He found he could think in his pulpit as well as in his study. Probably he has not written out and read a sermon for twenty years; and his people speak as if he had been growing young ever since. The old method of judging the age of a sermon by the color of the manuscript was no longer available, and the impression is left that they always have a new sermon, however old the theme or the thought. There are obviously great advantages in this method.

But, as there are at least two sides to all questions, so with this. What is best for some is not best for all. I wish to say, therefore, that if in adopting this method you find after a while, as some, alas! have found, that your pond often runs dry before the grist is ground, do not stick to it so long that your people, getting discouraged, decide to carry their grain to other mills where the ponds are not so soon exhausted. The drift just now is toward extemporaneous speaking, or, at all events, speaking without manuscript. It would seem to be the best method, and that men trained to it from the beginning would do better justice to them-

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selves and their theme in this way. But I am more and more persuaded that there is no *one* way of preaching but to preach the truth in the love of it. There is no *one* method of such paramount importance that all must adopt it, whether the harness fits or not. I knew a man, young, of fine ability and culture, settled near Boston, who became persuaded that the only true way of preaching was without manuscript. His written sermons were admirable. But, while they satisfied his people, they did not satisfy him. He must speak without notes. Unfortunately, he had no natural fluency of speech. He had no lack of thought, but a very painful lack of expression. He was deeply conscientious; and, feeling that the best method was the only worthy one, he insisted and persisted in his efforts, little knowing how he was trying the patience of his sympathetic and long-suffering people. His early death cut short the experiment. Whether, had he lived, he would have seen the error of his persisting against the counsel of his friends, till kindly invited to resign, we cannot tell. It was a conscientious fight with Nature. But Nature won, as she generally does in such cases.

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I knew another minister of unusual ability as a writer and preacher, when he used his manuscript. He came home from a trip to Europe, after hearing some of the leading ministers there, with the strong conviction that he must throw aside his manuscript, that reading was not preaching. Soon he began to astonish his people with the new method. His convictions were strong, but his gift was weak. His people loved and honored him; but his vain attempts at a method for which he had no natural capacity distressed them. Being thoroughly conscientious, he went on, dying, I think, before he discovered his mistake, leaving a volume of *written sermons* full of thought and power.

Still, the extemporaneous method may be the best for some, the best even for most, if carefully trained for it. All I mean to say is that, if after a fair trial you find the method does not fit you, do not feel that it is all over with you as a preacher. If you speak better from manuscript, hold on to it, though the heaven of your extemporaneous ambition falls Do not abuse the forbearance of your people by insisting on a method for which you are not adapted. Try both ways, if you will, and then choose the one you and your true friends deem best.

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One of our grandest preachers of the generation gone, Dr. Dewey, used to lament that he could not speak ten minutes without manuscript. But when I heard him, at the age of eighty, give his masterly written lecture on "Bases and Superstructure" to a large gathering of his ministerial brethren, I was glad he was not an easy extemporaneous speaker; for, had he been, we should have missed his strong, careful, condensed style. For one, I have found, as a hearer, that, when a man has something to say, it makes very little difference whether he says it with or without manuscript. That is the main thing,—to have something to say. Always make sure of that, and say it with the enthusiasm of personal conviction, and I think your people will care very little whether the manuscript on which you lean be on the pulpit or in your brain.

And now, a word of the closing service, the benediction. Little thought appears to be given generally to this service by minister or people. It would seem as if the congregation regarded it as the ministerial way of saying, "The meeting is adjourned." So they begin to gather up coats and canes and hats while the minister is announcing the

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welcome release. Doubtless, the ministers themselves are often to blame for this by the hurried and careless way in which the service is rendered.

Many external suggestions of an elocutionary character are made, which do not touch the heart of the service at all. It matters very little whether one lifts one hand or both hands, or stretches them out palms up or palms down. The essential thing is to know and to feel that it is a prayer, not a blessing pronounced in the old priestly fashion, but a blessing *invoked*, in which minister and people equally share; in short, a prayer like the other prayers, in which all are supposed to join. When it is regarded as a sort of "good-by," "I wish you well," the people take but little interest in it. But when it is offered as the prayer of all,— not the Lord bless *you*, but the Lord bless *us*,— then the formal rises into the spiritual, and hats and coats are forgotten in joining in a brief, Scriptural, closing prayer. I say Scriptural, because I think the old custom of using some familiar Scripture for the benediction is a good one, and worthy of being continued. I perceive a tendency among our younger ministers to extemporize this service. Of course

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there is the largest freedom to do this, if one chooses. Some variety is desirable; and a benediction may be flashed upon the mind at the time that is very beautiful. But, like all purely extemporaneous utterances, they are uncertain, like extemporaneous voluntaries on the organ. These may be very fine under the hand of one to music born and bred, but alas for the *amateur* who launches on that musical sea without a chart! and alas for the audience who are forced to experience all the agony of the wreck! With so many grand old passages from our Scripture to select from, passages full of hallowed and hallowing associations, I cannot but think that the old custom of a Scriptural passage for this closing prayer is worth clinging to. The closing prayer! this is the thought to be kept constantly before the mind. Then one need have no care about the posture of the hands, only the posture of the soul. The positively essential thing to perform all the services of the pulpit acceptably is a devout and reverent spirit, the Christ spirit of love to God and man. Let this spirit shine through all your pulpit services, and any little infelicity of voice or manner is soon forgotten. It is the spirit that quickeneth: postures profit

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nothing. All the graces of oratory ring hollow without the spirit. Be thankful for the graces of speech, and do not affect to despise them, but, above all, seek the reverent, earnest, consecrated spirit as the only worthy preparation for rendering fittingly and successfully the various services of the Christian pulpit.

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USAGES AND DUTIES.

I KNEW THEE TO BE EXPERT IN ALL CUSTOMS.—
Agrippa to Paul.

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VI.

USAGES AND DUTIES.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN: It is often an embarrassment to young ministers, just entering on their profession, to be ignorant of the ecclesiastical usages of the branch of the Church with which they are to labor. I wish, therefore, to speak very simply of the common usages of our Unitarian Church and of some of the duties they involve.

To begin with Ordination. In church polity, we are Congregationalists, pure and simple. We have no bishops or presbyters. All power is lodged in the congregation. It may take counsel of other congregations, if it pleases, in calling and settling a minister; but this is optional as a courtesy, not necessary. Without any outside aid, the congregation may call and ordain whom it will. This was the method of the earliest New England churches. It is still occasionally adopted, though it is more common now,

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where there are neighboring churches, to call in a friendly council, not of authority, but of sympathy and encouragement.

Ministers are also often ordained as evangelists, at some ministerial gathering, the candidate himself choosing the persons he would like to have participate in the service. When this is done and the person thus ordained afterward receives a call to settle over a particular church, he may enter on his work without any inaugural service, or the society may call a friendly council to install him in his office. There is no fixed method. Our liberal church is flexible, and gives the largest freedom to individual preferences.

But the usual method of ordination in New England, and the East generally, is by a council; and, as all students for the liberal ministry indulge a latent hope of settling eventually in the East, where the star of our liberal faith is supposed to shine the brightest, I will say a word first of the ordinary way in which a New England ordination is conducted. It is quite important for you all to know this, as very soon after your own ordination you may be called to participate in this service.

First, the happy parish which has secured

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the services of the man of its choice — one of you young ladies or gentlemen, for example — sends out what is called a "Letter Missive" to the neighboring churches, asking their aid by pastor and delegate, or delegates, in ordaining or installing the minister elect, naming the time for the meeting of the council, generally an hour or so before the public service.

The council is called to order by one of the ministers, and a moderator is elected, usually the oldest minister on the council. After taking the chair, he offers prayer. A clerk of the council is then elected, generally one of the younger men. He takes his place at the table, prepared with paper and pen, and at the request of the moderator reads first a list of all the churches to which Letters Missive have been sent. The names of ministers and delegates from the churches named are then called for, and taken down in writing. Now that the council is organized, the moderator asks for the records of the church concerning the call that has been extended, and the reply of acceptance.

When you are so happy as to get a call, I caution you against a careless or hasty reply. Do not let it be too brief, as if you did

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not feel the responsibility of the work, or too long, so as to weary; but let it be earnest, heartfelt, as if you appreciated the confidence reposed in you, and desired with your whole soul to do the work of a Christian minister. Remember that letter will be read in the presence of an assembled council. Every minister and every delegate will listen to get a taste of you. If its flavor is not pleasant, they will all look down, as disappointed people always do. If it be earnest and hopeful, they will look at you with beaming eyes, and think of that letter all the way home, and tell their wives that that parish has drawn a prize. Remember this letter is to be placed on the permanent records of the church, and that a hundred years after, perhaps, as some aspirant for fame writes a new history of the town, that letter will appear in print for coming generations to read.

I assure you, my young friends, your letter of acceptance, whenever you have a chance to write it, is worthy of serious thought and care. It is immortal: let it be fit to live.

After the correspondence between yourself and the church has been read, you will be

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asked for some testimonials of character and of your preparation for the work. Be sure not to leave these testimonials at home: this is sometimes thoughtlessly done, occasioning serious embarrassment to both minister and council.

After this, the moderator, if he be an old-fashioned man, as we old men are apt to be, will be quite likely to ask, "Has our young friend anything to say as to what induced him to enter the ministry, or of his idea of the ministerial work?" You had better be prepared for such questions. For, although they may not be asked, and although, if asked and not answered, no objection will be likely to be urged against proceeding with the ordination, still a plain, simple, honest statement of the leading motives, influences, experiences, that led you to choose the ministry for your life-work, would be sure to be of great interest to the council and of real service to yourself.

After the examination, some one will move that "the council is satisfied with the candidate, and will proceed to the services of ordination, according to the printed programme."

Here you will be surprised by an old cus-

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tom. The name of the man who is to give the right hand of fellowship is already on the programme; but he is officially reappointed by the council, because he is to express the fellowship of the churches represented. This seems a superfluous thing to do after the arrangements have all been made; but it is an old custom and is, virtually, only a sanction on the part of the council of the arrangements that have been made.

On adjourning to the church, well filled with the waiting congregation, the moderator announces the action of the council and the services proceed.

I give the usual order of the ordination service, as you will most likely be consulted by some of the leading members of the parish about the programme, and it will be a little awkward for you to have to say that you really know nothing about it. The parish committee man is sure he does not know. It is twenty years, maybe, since they had an ordination, or, if only two or *one*, it makes no difference,— nobody ever remembers the order.

Here it is, with the exception of the music,

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which is scattered through according to taste: —

I. Invocation.
II. Reading Scripture.
III. Sermon.
IV. Ordaining prayer.
V. Charge to minister.
VI. Fellowship of churches.
VII. Address to the people.
VIII. Closing prayer.
IX. Benediction by the new pastor.

At your first invitation to participate in an ordination service, probably the invocation or closing prayer will be assigned to you. You may think it an unimportant part, but you are mistaken. Both the opening and the close of an ordination service are very important, and should not be undertaken, if you can help it, without thought. These services are often seriously marred by an inappropriate opening or closing prayer.

At my own ordination, almost half a century ago, I well remember that the zealous brother who had the opening prayer assigned to him took occasion to go over the whole ground of the minister's relation to his people, and prayed and prayed, till there

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seemed nothing left to be said by the venerable man to whom the ordaining prayer had been assigned. I have often observed the same lack of good common sense in this opening service. It should be simply an invocation, a lifting up of the hearts of the people in thanksgiving for the event, and prayer for a blessing on the services.

So the closing prayer sometimes goes over the whole field of thought in most unprofitable and wearisome repetition, when all that is needed is a brief expression of the solemn joy of the occasion, with the prayer that God may seal the services with his benediction.

Never think then, for a moment, that either of these parts is unimportant. They should be the sunrise and sunset of the happy occasion,— making the ordination day memorable, not only for its meridian splendor, but for its welcome morning and restful evening.

As ministers are always liable to be called at short notice to take the part of an absent brother, I advise you to be prepared for any such emergency. Make, at your leisure, an appropriate selection of Scripture. Choose such passages as seem to be fitted to the *present* time and *present* occasion, and espe-

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cially such as stir your own soul. Then you will be likely to read them with unction and impressiveness. Put this selection in your pocket when you attend an ordination, and then, if called to fill a gap in Scripture reading, you will be prepared; and, if not, you will be able to enlarge and improve your selection by the wiser and better one you hear read.

Jot down also some appropriate thoughts for the hand of fellowship, so that you may be ready for that, in case of need. Indeed, this hand of fellowship is a part you will be likely to be called to take early in your ministry. It is often the most interesting part of the service. There is frequently some close friendship, growing out of student life or religious affinity, that gives to this service a personal and tender character. But, touching as these personal allusions always are, you must be on your guard against dwelling upon them. A very brief allusion is always most telling. Do not forget what this hand of fellowship means. It is not *your* hand of fellowship, merely extended as a personal friend, but the fellowship of the churches represented. It was for this you were chosen,— to express by your hand of wel-

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come the "fellowship of the churches." Always bear this in mind, that personal reminiscences may not betray you into a forgetfulness of what should be the substance of your address.

The day of one's own ordination, if he be worth ordaining, will be the great day of his life. To be sure, he has consecrated himself to the ministry long before, and looked forward to the day as the fruition of his fondest hopes. But, when it really comes, it will seem to him as the day of days. Voices out of the upper deep will speak to the deep within. I pity the man who can ever be ordained to the Christian ministry without deep emotion. If he does not pray then, in his heart of hearts, he never did, and probably never will. The prayer that is spoken by another will but imperfectly voice the unspoken prayer of him who, with sympathizing brother ministers all around him, and the people to whom he is to minister before him, and the greatness of his work pressing upon him, can only bow his head reverently at the altar where he is so soon to serve.

One feels, perhaps, all the more the solemn impression of his own ordination because he has nothing to do through it all but to sit and listen, and think and pray.

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And now, as you are ordained, we might as well say a word about your first sermons. Let them be very simple and earnest. Do not assume a complete knowledge of your work. Be cautious how you make promises of just what you shall do, or how you lay down elaborate plans of action. To pledge one's self at the beginning to a certain course is often embarrassing. Let the pledge be to Christian service, and that to God and your own soul, rather than to the people, and then you will be able to shape your course freely as wind and weather and parish currents may require.

While here at the opening sermon, we will slide over a few years, more or less, generally *less* in our day, to your farewell; for I want to say a word about this. Often, the first sermon and the last come discouragingly near together. With each and every one of you, may many happy years come between. But whether these years be many or few, whether they be happy or full of trial, be sure, when the time comes for you to leave, that you leave pleasantly. I am the more earnest to urge this upon you in season, because I have known so many instances where ministers have spoiled the influence of

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their ministry by filling their farewell sermons with old grievances, whining complaints, and caustic personalities, as if the whole cause of ill-success were all on one side, and that side the unregenerate parish. Such guns are always more dangerous at the breech than the muzzle. Better to be in front than in the rear of such a discharge. The recoil has maimed many a ministerial shoulder for life, and paralyzed his right arm so that he could never again shake hands cordially with his old parishioners. It has broken the collar-bone of old friendships that might have yielded pleasure through life. It has made it impossible for him ever again to preach to that people with pleasure or profit.

And this is not the end. The report of that gun, like the famous shot at Concord, is "heard round the world," — at least, far enough to seriously damage the prospects of the sharpshooter who fired it, putting parishes on their guard against exposing themselves to so deadly a marksman.

It is one of the beautiful things possible to every ministry, however short and whatever be the misfit, to make and to hold life-long friendships. Lack of religious sym-

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pathy between a minister and his people, from diversity of views or difference of opinion concerning the application of views in which they agree, may be so great as to make a change expedient. But this need not, and should not, cause alienation. I speak from experience. I have myself in the course of my ministry been obliged to leave two parishes for the very best of reasons, because they did not want me any longer. One was in the old anti-slavery days, when my conscience bade me preach what my people did not like to hear. So they very naturally wished to be rid of such a disturber of their peace. The other was later in my experience, when, after a seven years' pastorate, my congregation got tired of me, and wanted a smarter man. They made known their desire for a change in the most delicate and unobjectionable way possible,—by cutting off supplies. Agreeing with them entirely as to the inadequacy of the preaching and the necessity of a change, I left them with the utmost kindness of feeling.

I name this experience that you may not be discouraged under such mild trials, should they ever come to you, and also to show that leaving a society because you are no longer

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wanted is no occasion at all for bitterness or alienation. I have very many friends in both those parishes to-day, and, during the years that have intervened since I left them, have always been most cordially welcomed to their pulpits and their homes.

Just here, let me say a word about a minister's preaching what he honestly believes. There seems to be no other way for him to do, if he would respect himself or be respected by his people. But there is a wise and a foolish way of doing it. The foolish way of presenting any truth not familiar to the people, any truth not likely to be welcomed at first, is to make a great ado about it, to speak of it as an "advance truth" that only advanced minds can receive, as being far ahead of the age. As a fit climax of this folly, the preacher may assert boldly, straightening himself to his full height as he says it, "I intend to preach *the truth, the whole* truth, and nothing but the truth, whether men will hear or whether they will forbear. Were not the old prophets sawn asunder for the truth's sake? So will I be rather than withhold one accent of the word God has given me to speak." There may come a time for such a declaration of inde-

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pendence; but to begin with it, in that tone and spirit, is the foolish way of doing it.

The wise way is not to suggest any opposition at all; not to say anything about advanced truth, for which the world is not yet prepared. Just state simply, clearly, and strongly what you believe to be true about the matter, making no apology and no boast. Do it as a matter of course, as the very thing you are there for. Any attempt to straighten up and put on airs of martyrdom is sure to awaken opposition, and put your people on the defensive. If you inform them you intend a raid, they will be sure to throw up breastworks and wheel their guns into place. But, if you blow no trumpet, beat no reveille, sound no alarm, but present the truth precious to your heart as a truth that all are waiting for, and will be only too glad to hear, you will often be surprised to find an open ear where you thought to find it closed, and even a receptive mind where you looked for the fiercest opposition.

This is not the counsel of timidity. The pulpit that lacks heroism to speak what it sees as truth is false to its trust. I am no advocate of silence on questions upon which the community is divided. The minister

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who feels in his soul that God has given him a great and important truth to speak must speak it at his peril. John Milton said truly, "When God bids a man take the trumpet and blow a dolorous or a jarring blast, it is not in man's will to say what he shall speak or what he shall withhold." That is the kind of loyalty a true man must render to his convictions.

I have heard a young man charged on the day of his ordination, "Never use your influence till you get it." I have heard it several times. It is quite a taking phrase, and seems, on the surface, very wise. But I never hear it without remembering how many ministers in the old anti-slavery days sheltered their timidity under this false idea that they must not use their influence till they got it. Alas! waiting to get it, they failed to use it, and so lost the glory of helping to produce the public sentiment that finally made it safe for all to speak.

We had a noted liberal preacher, the tradition of whose eloquence is in all the churches, who was noted also for his *silence* during the early days, when prophetic souls in pulpits, on platforms, and through the press were pleading for the down-trodden and the dumb,

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who, as soon as the emancipation of the slave was seen to be necessary as a war policy, became an earnest advocate of the slave's right to freedom, giving as a reason that, "when he saw God was an Abolitionist, he felt he must be one, too." It would seem as if a minister of Him who came to undo heavy burdens and break every yoke, one who believed in human brotherhood and the golden rule, ought to have known that God was an Abolitionist before the defeat of Bull Run. But he was the minister of a very large and rich society, with conflicting views on the subject of slavery, and he did not want to "use his influence till he got it."

I knew another, settled also over a large and wealthy society close by. He was not deemed so eloquent as the man who saved his influence. But he was true as steel to his highest convictions,—gentle of spirit, serene as a June morning, and as firm as the rock of Gibraltar when duty called. The idea of not using his influence till he got it never seemed to have occurred to him. What he believed to be true, that he preached, calmly, firmly, with no apology and no boast. As he needed no war emergency to convince him that God was an Abolitionist, he applied

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the golden rule to the system of American slavery while it was yet a mighty power in the land. Some of his parishioners were greatly offended and threatened to leave. He was sorry, but could make no apology and no promise to desist. He rode no hobby; but on all proper occasions, as often as seemed to him best, he uttered his deep convictions. Finally, many of his parish left. He regretted it, for their sakes as well as his own, but could not retract or change his course. What he saw as truth he must proclaim; and it was thus he gained the influence of a noble, manly power against oppression and wrong, *by using it*, when to use it was not only a reproach, but threatened the breaking up of his society. But, instead of that, his fidelity made both himself and his society strong. It won to him true and loyal souls. He lived to see slavery abolished, his stampeding parishioners return, and died with the profound esteem, honor, and love of a reunited parish. These old days are gone; but their lessons of moral heroism are good for all times.

I do not know of any way to get an influence but to *use* it right along, just as fast as the light breaks, steadily, firmly, as if there

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were nothing else to be done, if one would be a true minister of the highest.

Usages and duties! They cannot be separated. They belong together. Do not undervalue any usage of your church. Fill it with the duty it involves, and it will never be a hollow form. That we have few forms is only another reason for filling them with life. Deem none of them trivial or unimportant. Study them, that you may be ready for any emergency; and may He who has called you to the glory of his service help you to be brave, strong, kind, pure, and loyal to the Christ spirit, that your ministry may be a constantly uplifting power!

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INFLUENCE OF PERSONAL CHARACTER.

WHO SHALL STAND IN HIS HOLY PLACE? HE THAT HATH CLEAN HANDS AND A PURE HEART.

Psalm.

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VII.

INFLUENCE OF PERSONAL CHARACTER.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN: I should like to say a word this morning, if I only knew how to say it, of the influence of a minister's personal character on his work.

Personal character! Unitarianism has always stood squarely for character. Disagreeing in almost everything else, it has been a unit in putting character first. Character has been the Unitarian ideal, not to say idol. The value we have set on truth, the church, worship, religion itself, has been mainly on account of their influence in forming a true and noble character. The supreme thing with us has been, and is, character. We all know what we mean by it, though to define it may not be easy. Like truth, it is too large and many-sided for definition. But when we say of one, "His character is above reproach, he is a pure,

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true, and noble man," no one doubts what we mean. We mean that the one of whom we say this has real intrinsic worth. He may be brilliant or dull, a genius or a plodder; but, independent of that, he has a distinct personality, which is trustworthy and reliable, which shines, like the sun, by its own light.

That a man's character should shine through all he does, and color it with its own hue, would seem to be inevitable. Nothing can prevent it. Whether he will or not, character shows through. But in no other profession is it so absolutely essential to one's work as in the ministry, because that deals directly with character; and a character in itself shaky, unsound, unreliable, can never, no matter what the intellectual ability, hope to be successful in building up character worthy of respect and honor.

In no profession is a character that "won't wash" so soon discovered as in the ministry. And it is not because a minister is more closely watched and narrowly criticised than other men. There is a very lenient judgment of ministers generally. No one expects to find them other than human. But there is a very rational expectation

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that the man whose chosen life-work it is to lift the world to a higher plane of thought and life, to aid in the formation of noble, reliable characters, should himself be a not altogether unworthy illustration of what he preaches. And, when they who hear him do not find it so, they are grieved and disappointed. Whether they say anything about it or not, they lose confidence in what the man says, no matter how well he says it. It is not that they have one standard for the minister and another for themselves, but rather their conviction that they have a right to expect their minister will give some evidence in his character that he believes his own preaching.

But I will not dwell on generalities, acknowledged by all, but come directly to some of the particulars of individual influence. It is not only positive sin and wrong-doing a minister is to shun, but everything that is incongruous with his life-work, everything that cripples his power as a teacher of righteousness. To take a single practical point. When I was here three years ago, I was fortunate enough to hear the students discuss, in a free and honest way, the great question of temperance, and I found there

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was about the same variety of opinion here in the school as in the outside world. This was very natural, as the students came in from the outside world, and brought their opinions with them, opinions they could not change till they saw reasons for doing so.

There may be the same diversity of opinions among this new company of students. But I should not think of judging one's intrinsic character by his views on this topic. They are very largely a matter of education. Different nationalities have different ideas about what constitutes temperance. But the question whether ministers may properly smoke, or drink beer or wine or whiskey, socially, is not to be decided by the inquiry whether one may not use these things and still be an upright and virtuous man. We all know there are intrinsically good men who use the weed, the beer, the wine, temperately and apparently without moral harm. The real question lies back of that. How will this indulgence, admitting it to be innocent, if properly guarded, affect one's ministerial work? Will it help or hinder the work to which the minister is consecrated, that of lifting the world to a higher plane of life? No one, I suppose, believes that smoking

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and drinking are essential to a pure and noble character. No one looks upon them as redeeming agencies. Most thoughtful men regard intemperance as one of the great afflictions of mankind, directly at war with all that looks to the elevation and improvement of man. It would seem, then, that one consecrated to the world's uplifting would have to array himself against this wide-spread evil. If he be wise, he will adjust himself to his work. He will permit in himself no indulgence that cripples his power of working against this vice. Now, the minister who indulges in his cigar, his beer, his wine, or his something stronger, may be a very good man; but when the time comes, as come it must, for him to speak out against this fearful evil, he will feel an embarrassment unknown to those whose personal habits are already fixed on the right side, and, when he comes to that "course of sermons to young men" expected of every minister, his discourses against smoking will be awkwardly mild. He will not dare to strike hard lest he hit himself. His personal habits, though not intemperate, blur his vision to the greatness of the evil, cut the nerve of his temperance interest, and weaken the voice that

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should be strong to lift this great burden from humanity.

President Livermore could never have written his admirable anti-tobacco essay, had he been a smoker. Suppose he could have smoked without serious injury to his physical constitution, his moral vision would have been so dimmed that he could never have seen to write that essay through the smoke of his cigar. We have good men in the ministry who deem it no wrong to take wine at their table or in the social circle, but they speak no strong word for the temperance reform. The loss of power to do this is one of the penalties they must pay for their indulgence. So I say that personal habits in regard to such matters are not to be judged by the question of intrinsic guilt or innocence, but by their bearing on ministerial influence. Whatever takes from a minister's power in speaking or working in behalf of any confessedly worthy cause, no matter how innocent and proper it may seem in the abstract, is of course a serious detriment to ministerial usefulness. And whatever helps to put him in a consistent attitude toward all needed reforms, so that he can speak and work for them with a will, backing every

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word with his habitual life, is a great gain, cheaply purchased by the self-denial it may cost.

Experience in the ministerial work often does more for one on these questions than any argument. To attend the funeral of a parishioner taken in the flower of life by delirium tremens, to attempt to comfort father, mother, sisters, brothers thus bereaved, may do more to brush away sophistries and set a man right on these questions than anything else.

But, aside from the influence of these habits on one's ministerial work, there is always peril in the indulgence to *one's self;* for, while many indulge and escape serious injury, many also fall. They always have, they always will. It is an old story; but, as it is true, we must not ignore it. It would seem as if the ministerial profession must be especially exempt from this vice; but alas! alas! some of our brightest pulpit lights have gone out before it. If you knew how many, you would be startled.

A few years ago, I was present to listen to the graduating class of the Divinity School at Cambridge. Among the essays there was one in particular that impressed me greatly.

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It was original, it was strong, it was inspiring. It gave evidence of real power and great promise. I did not know then of the worm at the heart of that fair bud. The writer's career was brief and sad. He had a few short settlements, married a beautiful woman, was soon divorced, and, the last I heard of him, he was a wanderer on the earth, a planet broken away from all the centripetal attractions of virtue, groping in the blackness of darkness, a hopeless inebriate.

But I will not dwell upon this obvious peril. There are many other evils to be guarded against. There is one peril of which I cannot speak in this presence. It is all the more insidious because it cannot be named. But there is no temptation when yielded to that leads so surely and directly to hell,—not the theological hell whose flames no longer terrify, but the real hell whose flames are kindled in the soul. Ministerial wrecks, black hulks of blasted character and prospects, are found all along our coast from yielding to this unspeakable temptation; and fresh reports of these dire disasters are ever coming in. But we will pass on to lesser though still serious evils,

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evils that cripple a minister's usefulness and mar his character.

I knew, years ago, an excellent minister, in most respects, clear-headed, kind-hearted, a good writer and speaker, whose sermons everybody liked, who lost caste and usefulness as a minister simply because wherever he went he always got in debt. I do not think he was intentionally or even consciously dishonest. But it looked just like it to other people. There are some very sensible folk so obtuse that they see no difference between a minister running in debt, with no means of paying, and a carpenter or shoemaker doing the same thing. When this is done over and over again, in different places, it is no matter of wonder that parishes lose their confidence in the minister's integrity. At first, a few generous friends will club together and settle the bills, as they would never think of doing for the carpenter or shoemaker. But at last it becomes monotonous. They do not exactly see why a minister should not pay his butcher and tailor like other people, or why, if his salary be small and his wants large, he should not adapt his wants to his means. So, although this sort of man changes parishes very often,

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both his debts and his damaged reputation dog him wherever he goes, till very likely he will have to go home to live with his mother-in-law, and send in his name to the American Unitarian Association as a transient supply. His opportunities, alas! are likely to be very transient.

But suppose such a man could keep in the ministry, how could he ever preach on honesty, self-denial, the glory as well as necessity of living within one's means? The very naming of such themes from that man would fill the pews with winks and nudges more significant than devotional. A minister cannot be too careful to pare down his needs to his income. His parish will respect him all the more for that scrupulous economy which leaves his house poorly furnished and his bookshelves scantily filled, that he may pay his honest debts, and not be obliged to have his friends pay them for him. The minister who begins that way and continues that way will not only gain the confidence of his parishioners, rich and poor alike, and be able to preach on honesty without blushing, but he will enjoy the better furnishing of his house, and the gathering in of new books, as he can never do if he recklessly runs in debt, with no earthly means of paying.

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Manners and morals are so close of kin that a word on clerical manners, in connection with clerical character, may not be altogether out of place. The old style of clerical manners and clerical dress has passed away. The sweet old picture of the country pastor in Goldsmith's "Deserted Village" is now a picture only. No longer do children

"Pluck his gown to share the good man's smile."

Both gown and bands have gone, not only from the street, but from the pulpit, save in a few places where the gown is still retained, as Dr. Gannett used to say, "to hide an awkward delivery." There are now, in our liberal churches certainly, no clerical dress or manners as distinct from the secular manners of good breeding. Still, there are certain proprieties belonging to the profession which linger from an instinct of fitness. A man who should enter the pulpit in linen duster, scarlet vest, and nankeen trousers, would show entire independence; but he would show something else, too, of which men generally are not so proud. In eschewing the dude in the pulpit, one need not necessarily become a dunce, though the transition is sometimes made. There is a

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common sense that must be allowed to govern such things in the pulpit and out of it.

Some ministers pride themselves on dressing and behaving so as never to be suspected of being a minister, doing both most successfully. But oddity is no sure mark of genius. If a minister really loves his profession, and is not ashamed of it, I do not see why he need be so afraid of its being discovered. Students of medicine, of science, of law, are not afraid of being known as such. I confess I am rather pleased when one takes me for a minister, though it is always a mystery to me why he should. I do not believe in one's trying to show the cloth; but, where it is worn so naturally as to show itself, I see no harm in it, and nothing derogatory to the wearer. Simplicity, geniality, and sincerity of manners are the qualities most befitting clergy as well as laity. They shock no one, and they please everybody. They start no caustic criticism. They raise no doubts about the sincerity of the pulpit word, but win for it a kindly and attentive hearing.

Some ministers seem to think young people are repelled by seriousness. To be "hail-fellow-well-met" is to them the true way of enlisting the thoughtless. There is little temp-

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tation among our ministers to over-seriousness: they are a cheerful and genial set of people, who see as much religion in a smile as in a tear. This is well. But I think the idea of "hail-fellow-well-met" as a means of grace is overestimated. Most people like a rational seriousness in their minister. They may be frivolous themselves and not quite enjoy it in him. They may enjoy a joke and not quite like their minister to have the reputation of a joker. They would like to feel that his heart is in his profession. They want a minister, not to play whist with, innocent as that may be, but one to whom they may go in sorrow and joy, in disappointment and success, in all the great experiences of life, and with whom they may talk of the meaning of life and the rational base of faith and hope. His most serious sermons will suit them best; for they feel the need of being lifted out of mere frivolity into the region of higher thought and nobler life. Let a minister only be simple, natural, sincere, and he need not be afraid of repelling by his seriousness. It will win even the thoughtless, when the lack of it, if it does not repel, will leave them where they are, on the lower grades of life.

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But, important as are the things I have named,—strict temperance, avoiding even the appearance of evil, personal purity, upright and downright honesty, and manners befitting one's profession,—important as these are to the character and influence of all ministers, there is that far deeper than these qualities alone would indicate, vitally necessary.

A very good moralist of the "Poor Richard" type may be made out of this material; but, for the higher ranges of the religious life, higher qualities are needed. Indeed, whatever *effect* one would produce in his preaching, he must have as a *cause* in himself. Only the reverent man can wake reverence. Only the devout man can wake devotion. Only the believing man can enkindle faith. Only the enthusiastic man can stir enthusiasm. Only the real lover of God and man can inspire this love in other souls. All he would have his people become, the minister must continually seek to be, or he will seem to them, in the words of the old prophet, "only as a very lovely song, of one that has a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument; for they hear his words, but do them not."

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There must be in ministerial character something so deep as to keep alive a real *love* of one's work, not a love of preaching merely, for personal pride may lead to that, but a love of the work for its own sake. This love of his work, that is never discouraged by apparent failure, is a quality that always colors both pulpit and pastoral labors. It is known and read of all men. A minister who loves his work will make his people love it too, and love what he is working for, and so love to work with him. It will wake that "enthusiasm of humanity" which everybody feels the need of, that fire whose warmth is always so genial, but which so few of us know how to kindle. We gather our dry chips of amusements, have social parties, dance and play games, act charades and dramas, and the blaze shoots up and snaps quite merrily for a time, and we wonder why the *Church* isn't warmed; why all who come to the parties do not come to the Sunday service; why, with all this enthusiasm for a good time, as it is called, there is so little enthusiasm for the worship and work of the church. The reason is not far to see. It was a mere social fire, a parish parlor fire built for the evening's entertainment, built

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with light wood, not designed to keep over night. It had no real connection with the furnace-fires that warm the Church spiritually. These fires are fed with more solid material, the anthracite of personal religious interest, a deep sense of the greatness of the work of the Church, its necessity to the religious life of the community, an earnest love for its worship and work. Only this can kindle *religious* enthusiasm. Social enjoyments are admirable in their place, and rational religion has no frown for innocent recreations. There is a time to dance as well as a time to worship. But all hopes of awakening *religious* enthusiasm by parish parties are destined sooner or later to disappointment. They deal with the surface of life, religion with its depths. There is no necessary connection between the two. Religious enthusiasm is born of the deeper nature. Its fires are fed with different materials. It is thoughtful. It asks deep questions about the meaning of life, about human nature and human destiny. It looks up. It aspires. It is not satisfied with pleasure. It seeks life, a higher and nobler life, a life of sacred uses in a world of need and sin, a life in sympathy with the truest and noblest souls, a life

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touched and guided by that Holy Spirit all holiest souls have known, a life in harmony with the divine will.

To wake this deeper nature and consecrate it to the higher life is the work of religion. Whatever helps to do this aids in kindling the fires of religious enthusiasm. So we see the kind of fuel needed to warm minister and people. This enthusiasm cannot be *got up*. It must spring up. It is a living thing, with roots and branches, nourished, not from the earth alone, but from the overarching heavens.

This leads to a word on the necessity of a minister's taking heed to his own spiritual condition, not only, as Paul said of himself, "lest, having preached to others, I myself should be a castaway," but lest, in getting cast away himself, he wreck his parish with him; for a parish may be wrecked, not only on rocks that break the hull in pieces, but on flats of indifference that leave the ship intact, but hard aground.

It may seem to those who do not know that a minister is in no danger of neglecting to use for his own improvement the means he is continually urging upon others. But we who are in the work know that the peril

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is real. We deal so constantly with high and sacred truths that our very familiarity with them is liable to dull our sense of their real value. Working continually in the mint of religious ideas, the golden coin we stamp and weigh and send out is liable to lose something, to our thought, of its intrinsic worth.

Here some of you will remind me of that great-hearted philanthropist who was so busy saving other souls he forgot all about his own, never stopping to think whether he had a soul or not. It is a good story, and has its uses in brushing away the old idea of saving one's soul from imaginary perils, unmindful of the needs of those around us. But I think in our liberal ranks this idea has been overworked. If, by saving our souls, we mean saving them from all that debases and enslaves, and bringing them into the glorious liberty of the sons of God, then, surely, there is nothing ignoble in caring for one's own soul. It is the starting of earnest thought in this direction that is to most people the beginning of the best life they know. Ministers, quite as much as other people, need to take heed to their own spiritual condition and needs.

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Take a single example. We believe the Church, in its various ministrations of worship and work, is one of the divine agencies for religious education and quickening. By it and through it we are constantly to work for the higher life. If we did not believe in the Church as such a redeeming agency, we should never think of studying for the Christian ministry. We might still work for the world's welfare, but it would not be in that line. But, if the Church in all its ministries be so important to those we minister to, is it any less important to those of us who minister? And is there not some danger growing out of our constant ministry to others, of forgetting our own need of those ministrations for ourselves; our own need of the prayers of the congregation mingling with ours, our own need of preaching our sermons to ourselves before we give them to the people, not to think how they will sound to others, but to find how much of the bread of heaven they have for our own souls?

I have often wondered that ministers on vacation, or having a spare Sunday, should be so indifferent whether they worship anywhere or not, even when a church of their own faith is at hand. It looks on the sur-

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face as if such a one had a slight appreciation of the value of church services unless he officiated. One would think, after long listening to his own sermons and prayers, that *he* would get tired of them if the congregation did not, and that it would be a refreshment to worship with his fellows, as one of the congregation, free from personal anxiety.

I confess this indifference to church attendance, when opportunity offers, astonishes me. Such ministers seem to forget that, when, instead of availing themselves of the rare privilege of worship, they use the hour for a walk in the woods, or for staying at home, writing to friends, or reading an article in the last review, they have been doing the very thing that will grieve and discourage them when done by their own parishioners. It is just because the æsthetic Mr. A. chooses to walk in his flower-garden instead of going to church, and the grocer Mr. B. thinks he must look over his accounts, and the literary Mr. C. wants to read up for a magazine article, and the social Mr. D. thinks he must stay at home to entertain his Sunday visitors, that the church is thin, and the minister, after having labored to do his very best

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on a fresh sermon, is discouraged that so many who profess to like him are away, each following his bent.

If this be an evil to be rectified, I do think the ministers should take care how they encourage it by their own indifference to church attendance when opportunity offers.

I do not put this on the ground of example, or even of duty, but of privilege. It certainly is not consistent for one who believes so much in the Church as to give his life-work to its service, to be indifferent to its worship for himself. If he deems the service, when he ministers, a privilege to others, he must set an astounding value on his own part in it if he can see nothing worthy of his attendance when another officiates.

Besides, what a cheer it is to a country pastor to see the brother minister who is spending his vacation in the neighborhood walk in with his friends on a Sunday morning, to join in worship!

And, if there be no church of one's own faith in the place, let him show his liberality by attending the church there established. He may hear a better sermon than he gen-

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erally preaches himself, as I have often done; or he may hear one of another sort, as I also have done, which will make him thank God all the way home for the sweeter faith and hope he cherishes.

But I must not hold you longer. This is the substance of what I have been trying to say. It is the personal character of the minister that tells on every part of his work. If one fail in his character, he is bankrupt indeed. No matter how much learning he may have, how much genius, how much eloquence, if he have no worthy character behind it, neither his word nor work will stand. He must seek continually to be what he would have others become, to be truthful, to be sincere, to be pure, to be honest, to be well-mannered, to use faithfully the means of spiritual growth he recommends to others, to live as he preaches, in communion with the highest; and then, though he may not draw the crowd, he will draw the blessing of God on his people and his work.

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SEALED ORDERS.

THE SEA IS HIS.— *Psalm.*

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VIII.

SEALED ORDERS.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,— "Every human soul," says Dr. Holmes in his Life of Emerson, "leaves its port with sealed orders. These may be opened earlier or later on the voyage; but, until they are opened, no one can tell what is to be his course, or to what harbor he is bound."

We will let this serve as a text for our closing lecture. Some of you are getting ready to leave port, loosing your sails, and will soon weigh anchor and steer for the open sea. All of you are expecting to sail sooner or later. You are studying Christian navigation, learning the use of compass, chart, and nautical instruments, all looking to the voyage you are to take. What course you are to steer, when the time comes for leaving port, you know not. You have thought of many pleasant voyages you would like to make, over smooth seas to golden shores. Maybe you will. You can-

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not tell. Your orders are sealed, not to be opened till you are out of sight of land, and feel the ground swell of the deep sea beneath your keel.

There is something profoundly impressive in these "sealed orders." If only they were open, if you could know just what they were before leaving port, so that you could talk the matter over with old navigators, and learn about the reefs and shoals to be shunned, and the safe harbors one may make in a storm, it would save you from much anxiety. But your orders are sealed. Not till you are off sounding will you know them; and not till the end of the voyage will your friends or the world know just what they were. It is the finished voyage that reveals their character. That was what revealed to Dr. Holmes the sealed orders of Emerson. It was not till the end of the voyage they were fully known. Then all was clear.

Dr. Holmes gives a long list of these sealed orders, from which I select a few:—

"Thou shalt not profess that which thou dost not believe."

"Thou shalt not heed the voice of man when it agrees not with the voice of God in thine own soul."

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"Thou shalt speak the truth as thou seest it without fear, in the spirit of kindness to all thy fellow-creatures."

"Nature shall be to thee as a symbol. The life of the soul in conscious union with the infinite shall be for thee the only real existence."

"Go forth with thy message among thy fellow-creatures. Teach them that they must trust themselves as governed by that inner light which dwells with the pure in heart, to whom it was promised of old that they shall see God."

"Thy life shall be as thy teaching, brave, pure, truthful, beneficent, hopeful, cheerful, hospitable to all honest belief, all sincere thinkers, and active according to thy gifts and thy opportunities."

These are but specimens of Emerson's sealed orders, as Dr. Holmes read them in the light of his life. This is the only way we can ever read them. Read in this way, in the light of one's life, it sometimes happens that we find orders in strong contrast with the above named. Have there not been ministers, few and far between we will fondly hope, whose sealed orders, read in the light of *life*, must have been something like this?

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"Thou shalt not profess that which thy *people* do not believe."

"Thou shalt heed the voice of ~~man~~, and it shall be to thee as the voice of God."

"Thou shalt speak the truth as the majority of thy influential parishioners hold it, *without fear.*"

"Nature shall be to thee a field for agriculture, and conscious union with God a mystic's dream."

"Go forth with thy message among thy fellow-men. Teach them to take life easy, to turn off the inner light, and look out for number one."

"Thy life shall be as thy teaching, easy, self-indulgent, hospitable to all self-seeking that is respectable, and lucrative, and destructive of all vital godliness, according to thy gifts and opportunities."

Besides these *contrasts* with Emerson's sealed orders, we sometimes discover others, like these: —

"Thou shalt not be particular to pay thy debts, but let thy generous parishioners settle thy bills."

"Thou shalt be strong in promises, but weak in fulfilment."

"Sound thy people as to what they would

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like to have thee preach, and preach that *with boldness and fervor*."

"When thou hast inadvertently spoken a strong word for righteousness, thou shalt hasten to take it back if thy people do not like it."

"So shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed."

But no minister, of course, ever went to sea with such sealed orders. He only went without any; and so, having no direction from his owner, he was left to write them in the inerasable log of his ministerial life, as he sailed on, trimming his sails to the changing winds of expediency. But such cases, though not common, are frequent enough for warning.

Many persons might be selected from our best Christian workers whose sealed orders, judged by their ministerial fidelity, were just as high as Emerson's, and whose obedience to them was just as complete. Nay, many have found in their sealed orders things which Emerson did not find in his papers. His orders were grand and inspiring for the thinker, but not always so helpful for the worker. There are few men who quicken thought like Emerson; but his thought is

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not easily harnessed to practical work. He followed his own oft-quoted saying, and "hitched his wagon to a star." It was high riding, aërial and breezy, but not always convenient for agricultural purposes. It took too long to change the harness. It was not Mr. Emerson's peculiar views about church ordinances merely, that led him out of the Christian ministry. He was a devotee of individualism. He could hardly have been successful as the minister of a working church. He was not born for that. He had no appreciation of organized efforts. He did not believe in the Church. He thanked God that he never asked one to join it. To his peculiar nature there was a touch of bondage in it. He trusted to his wings rather than to his hands and feet. He had a skylark soul. He could soar and sing better than he could plough and plant. His "wagon" was for commerce with the skies, not for mundane uses. True, he returned to the Church in his old age, as the dove to the ark; but it was only to bring a leaf, showing that the floods of individualism had abated, and the dry land, waiting to be cultivated, had appeared. His sealed orders were of the highest kind for individual life

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and personal character; but they fail of meeting all the needs of a patient Christian worker for the kingdom of God, who sees the necessity of "working together" with his fellow-men in associated action for human uplifting.

We may think, therefore, of one as reading and accepting all the sealed orders of Mr. Emerson touching the relation of the individual soul with God, and yet finding other orders for the practical work of the ministry, such as these:—

"Remember that man is not an individual, but a member of a body."

"Thou shalt not live for self, not even for self-improvement, but for the welfare of thy fellows."

"Thou shalt not be satisfied with the *vision* of truth, but strive continually to work the truth thou seest into thine own and other lives."

"Thou shalt seek not only to announce truth boldly, but to make it a *persuasive* power for the higher life."

"Thou shalt deem no human being beneath thy notice."

"Thou shalt honor alike the rich and the poor, and permit no outward distinctions to influence thy regards."

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"Thou shalt live in cordial sympathy with thy people, rejoicing in their joys and sorrowing in their sorrows."

"Thou shalt help them to see the deformity of sin and the beauty of holiness."

"Thou shalt win them to the love of Christian worship and Christian work."

"Thou shalt show them the meaning and use of a church of God, that they may feel their need of a church home as truly as of a family home."

"Thou shalt teach them the blessed art of bearing one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."

Something like this may you all find in your sealed orders, only more and better. You will find more and better if you keep mind and heart opened upward for the Divine Hand to write the orders of each new day.

And now, remembering that your sealed orders can be fully known only at the close of the voyage, when all accounts will be rendered in, let a word or two be said on the voyage itself, the pleasures and perils of the ministerial sea, the commerce in which you are to engage, and the flag under which you are to sail.

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First, the pleasures of the ministerial voyage. We think too little of this. We hear so much of the perils of the sea, of wrecks and disasters, that we lose sight of the *glories* of the sea, and the blessedness of that wide commerce with humanity that is open to every ministerial voyager.

The sea is the great highway of nations. We used to be taught that oceans *separated* the continents they rolled between: now we are learning that they *unite* them, that these apparent wastes of water are a liquid highway joining the ends of the earth together, opening myriad avenues of travel, unobstructed by mountains or ravines or deserts, whereby the whole world may hold friendly communication and learn the meaning of brotherhood by reciprocal interchange of merchandise, material and spiritual.

To cross and recross such an ocean for friendly commerce with all nations, bearing the rich freight of a pure and liberal Christianity to every port and every ship spoken, is a great privilege. Never to make dishonest entries or sail under false colors, never to pass a signal of distress for the sake of a quicker passage, never to run down smaller crafts or take the wind out of another's sails

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on a lee shore, never to be chartered for an immoral trade, never to blockade a port for gain, always making the wide sea a highway for wide ministries of love and mercy, sending out life-boats to the wrecked, supplying those long wrecked and short of food with fresh provisions, giving to befogged navigators their latitude and longitude, taking on board the crew and passengers of sinking ships and sending them on by the first "homeward bound," bearing the freight that never spoils, and on which no duties are laid by any nation, the freight of good will, helpfulness, brotherly love, the religion of the "golden rule" and the "good Samaritan," into every port, and leaving it in every inlet and bay along the coast, saluting the fishing-smacks and tug-boats of humanity with the same cordiality as the stately steamships bearing titled lords and ladies or untitled but equally noble men and women over the sea, supplying with fresh oil the light-houses along the shore, and looking to the buoys on reefs and shoals, taking fresh soundings for new charts where the old have proved faulty, marking the variations of the compass in different localities, and the hidden currents that sweep one out of his course without

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his knowing it,— so making the navigation of the great sea of human life safer for all,— oh, this is a glorious, *glorious* privilege, well worth the braving of any perils!

There are dangers, of course, in this ministerial voyage of life for which you are preparing. But then, if in the voyage of real Christian service one goes down, he need not fear, since it is only to "a deeper sea," held in the hollow of the same Almighty hand.

It is the mission of danger to make us watchful. We soon learn that old charts, however useful, are not always trustworthy; that shoals change with changing currents. There is perpetual need in our spiritual navigation of new soundings and a constant lookout. Signal lights must be kept burning to avoid collisions, and the heavenly orbs diligently consulted every clear night to rectify the observations of the noon-day sun, and the uncertain log. It is thus on the ocean good navigators exercise "eternal vigilance," not only for their own safety, but to prepare new maps and charts for the safety of younger voyagers. Not less vigilant should be the watch on the sea of human life, especially by moral and spiritual navigators, who

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by their lack of care may peril not only their own, but others' safety, even the safety of a whole fleet steering by their charts.

We ministers cannot lay too much stress upon consulting the heavenly bodies. The theological compass varies. The pole star is steady and sure. Theological opinions are as various as ocean currents and variable as the winds. We cannot trust entirely to these. They served their day like the early maps of New England, which we hardly recognize now as we compare them with modern surveys. We must make our own observations by the eternal lights set in the soul by Him who made man the temple of his own holy spirit. In our exchange of religious thought with all the nations of the earth, we must adopt the principle of "free trade." Whatever may be thought best for our national policy, our Christian policy and principle must be free trade. We must lay no duties on any of the foreign productions of free thought. We are not afraid of them. If they are better than ours, we want them. If ours are better than theirs, they need them. The time has fully come for a free *untaxed* exchange of religious opinions. Not the oldest, but the truest, is destined to win;

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not those which have the largest following, but those to which the enlightened reason most fully responds. We throw open our ports to the best products of all the Oriental faiths. We have no fear of placing them beside "the beatitudes, and the Sermon on the Mount." If they will only take ours in return, we will not say a word of duties. So, with all the sects of Christendom, *free trade*, free exchange of opinion, are all we ask; open ports, no protection for orthodoxy or heresy, no tax on truth; free as the winds that sweep the sea let our commerce be, and let the everlasting right win.

And now, as professed Liberals, under what flag shall we sail? To sail without a flag would be following in the wake of that famous "Man without a Country," whose lonely cruise was not encouraging. But ours must be no narrow denominational flag, though we may put "Liberal, or Unitarian," on our pennons, if we like, for convenience, while sailing through the fleet, just to indicate the nature of our exchange products. We do not set up a separate Christian State. We are no secessionists from simple and pure Christianity after the Christ type, only from that which is false to

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him, and the spirit of his life and teaching. So we hold on to the old flag.

That flag, alas! has so often been dishonored by false doctrines and false practices that some true and noble men and women have hauled it down. But where shall we find a better? Has any one of the "Ten Great Religions" of the world a flag more worthy of honor? There are good things, of course, in all these religions. But we are not Hindus. We are not Buddhists. We are not Mohammedans. We are Christians. We were born under the Christian flag. It waved over our cradles. Under its folds our mothers taught us our evening prayers. It is our birthright flag. We will honor it. We will free it from reproach. We will wash out its stains.

When our dear national flag was dripping with the blood of four million slaves, some true and noble men, lovers of liberty and right, said, "It is dishonored, past recovery. It is

> "'A fustian flag, that proudly waves
> In solemn mockery o'er a land of slaves.'

Haul it down! It is unworthy to float over a true republic." But others said: "Hold on: it is the flag of our common country,

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the flag under which our fathers fought for independence. Though dishonored, let it float on the breeze still, and we will make the country worthy of it." We see now which were right. So let us hold on to our Christian flag, and let the winds of God's truth snap it free from all the errors, superstitions, and persecutions it may still sanction. To us it waves with the pure, self-sacrificing love of Jesus. To us it speaks of the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of all mankind, of peace on earth, good will to men. We fling it to every breeze that blows, over every sea we sail, not to limit, but to enlarge our fellowship. If some be moved to put their sectarian mark upon it and use it for narrowness, for warning from the fleet all who bear it not, we will keep it flying from our mast-head for its *breadth*, its inclusiveness, broad as the sky, hospitable as the heavens, all-embracing as the Christ spirit of redeeming love.

How little they know of the real genius and spirit of Christianity who use the name to *limit* rather than to include, who do not see that it stands for all good under whatever name or flag! Our flag is the symbol of our loyalty to all that is truest and best

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in that religion into which we were born. But our very loyalty to the spirit of him who said, "Whosoever doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven, the same is my brother, my sister, and mother," demands that we should recognize all as friends of God who are working for God and his children.

This indicates the way we should regard those who are really with us in spirit, but who do not choose to sail under the Christian flag. If we find they are sailing the sea for the same great essential object that we are, if they be working according to the light that is in them to right all wrong and establish all right, to lift man out of ignorance and sin and bring about the reign of love and brotherhood, then they belong to the great Christian fleet, under whatever colors they may sail. They may prove themselves more worthy of our flag than we who bear it. At all events, we will show them that to our thought our flag is inclusive of all good service to humanity; that we love it and keep it flying because it stands for all the best things we know, because it is the most inclusive flag that floats over the sea of our common humanity, be-

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cause with us it stands not for dogma, but spirit, the spirit of him who gave himself to unite the world in the service of God and man.

And if, as we sail the great sea on the lookout for whatever service we may render, we should like the early disciples take Jesus with us into the ship, he will not seize the helm nor assume command, as some seem to fear, for none know better than he that each soul must steer its own bark and make its own celestial observations; but he will pour the oil of trusting faith on the stormy waters, he will help us to find the pole star, to steer by the compass of the spirit, to work out correctly our observations of the heavenly orbs, and so to read our sealed orders that our ministerial lives may not be a failure, but a grand success.

And now, ladies and gentlemen, the hour has come to say farewell. Let me very cordially thank you for the kind attention you have given to what has been said of the work to which you have consecrated your lives. That the subject has been inadequately treated, none know better than myself. I have simply brought you some of the fruits of my experience and observation dur-

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ing a long ministry, which was never dearer than now in my seventy-ninth year. I wish I could give you some idea of the greatness and glory of the work as it rises before me from the summit of fifty years. But no tongue can tell it fully. It must be learned by each new laborer in the field, whose rewards are sure. Into this field some of you are about to enter in all the joy of a consecrated purpose. May you find in your work the fulfilment of your fondest hopes. Cherish great expectations,— not in what *you* can accomplish, but in what the indwelling spirit can accomplish through you. Never limit in your thought the mighty power of redeeming love; but "by pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, as sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing yet possessing all things, may you do the work of evangelists and make full proof of your ministry."

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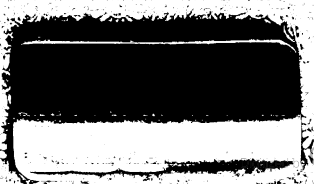

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